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THE CONTRIBUTION OF PLAY ACTIVITIES  
TO THE SURVIVAL OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE  
IN FOUR MELANESIAN SOCIETIES

by



KEITH L. LANSLEY

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend,  
to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled  
"The Contribution of Play Activities to the Survival of Traditional Cul-  
ture in Four Melanesian Societies," submitted by Keith L. Lansley  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.





## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to discover to what extent, if any, twelve traditional Melanesian play activities (namely, canoeing, crossing the bridge, hide and seek, spear throwing, top spinning, handball, string figures, music, dancing, swinging, swimming and finger-games) contributed to the survival of traditional culture in four Melanesian societies (namely, Wogeo, Tanga, Goodenough Island and Manus).

The data available was limited to ethnographical reports written in the English language, and, due to the tendency of ethnographers each to study different societies, there was little opportunity for validating the material presented. However, since the literary data used is classifiable as primary source material, the writer feels justified in accepting the evidence as being an accurate record of the cultural conditions as they existed at the time the respective studies were conducted.

A preliminary study was conducted to facilitate the selection of the twelve play activities and the four societies treated in detail in the study. One hundred and eighteen traditional Melanesian play activities were collected, classified and geographically located, and a summary form of this project has been included as an appendix to this study.

Schemas for describing culture and determining the conditions



necessary for cultural survival were developed to examine possible roles of play in maintaining a traditional culture.

In an exploratory study such as this it was possible to make only tenuous conclusions. However, nine of the twelve activities did appear to contribute significantly to the maintenance of at least one aspect of cultural survival. Because of the nature of the conclusions drawn, detailed descriptions of the traditional cultural characteristics of the four societies, and the play activities practised in the respective societies, have been included. Consequently, it is envisaged that readers of the study may agree, or disagree, with the conclusions made on the face of the evidence presented.





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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A sincere thank-you is also extended to Mr. R. G. Glassford who served as Acting-Chairman of the thesis committee during Dr. Howell's absence. Mr. Glassford was particularly helpful in assisting in formulating the classification system used in the study, and if this system is of use for similar studies in the future, much of the credit belongs to him.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, research workers and practitioners of physical education have tended to justify their existence in academic and educational fields in terms of the unique contribution of the discipline to the individual's need for satisfactory biological and psychological development.

However, analyses of play activities made up of various games and pastimes have been used on numerous occasions by those involved in a variety of academic pursuits. For example, historians have frequently described the games and pastimes of famous public figures in order to give an understanding of their personalities, and to provide clues to help explain the actions of persons being dealt with (e.g., Queen Elizabeth I's love of blood sports). Games have also been described in order to cast light upon political movements, particularly in relation to preparations for warfare (e.g., the promotion of archery by Henry VIII and his banning of those sports which in his opinion detracted from military prowess).<sup>1</sup>

Mathematicians have studied games with a particular emphasis on mathematical probability. They have been particularly

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<sup>1</sup>G. G. Coulton, Social Life in Britain from the Conquest to the Reformation, Cambridge University Press, 1956, p. 397.



interested in games of chance, and more recently, in games involving complex strategy.<sup>2</sup>

Sociologists and psychologists have been interested in the way games and pastimes reflected the customary behavioural patterns of particular societies, and the personality traits of individuals within those societies.<sup>3, 4</sup>

Anthropologists often cite games (and occasionally describe them in detail) in order to give a more complete description of the customs and way of life of specific cultures being examined.<sup>5</sup> Some anthropologists, however, have written complete articles and books about the recreational activities of societies without relating these activities to any aspect of culture.<sup>6</sup>

In most instances games and pastimes have not been described adequately, due perhaps, to the particular interests or purposes of the respective authors. The inadequacies of the descriptions of play activities may have also resulted from a lack of understanding of

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<sup>2</sup>Roger Caillois, "Unity of Play: Diversity of Games," Diogenes, No. 19, 1957, p. 108-110.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 102-106.

<sup>4</sup>John Huizinga, Homo Ludens, Boston: Beacon Press, 1964.

<sup>5</sup>For example: Margaret Mead, Growing Up in New Guinea, New York: Mentor Books, 1963, p. 17-23.

<sup>6</sup>For example: Kathleen Haddon, Artists in String, New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. Inc.





the components of play. These components include the inherent properties such as competition (or absence of competition), location, organization, rules, objectives, movement, material apparatus, and the internal properties of play which determine the tactics and skills necessary for successful participation;<sup>7</sup> and contextual properties such as the age and sex of participants, traditional location (e.g., village, beach, town, or country-side), status of players, and special seasons or occasions when the activity was pursued. These should all be noted for a complete representation of particular play activities.

Physical educators, trained in the area of play, could possibly have alleviated the incompleteness of the available reports of play activities, and should in the future, endeavour to preserve a knowledge of current play activities which may otherwise be lost.

Huizinga suggested that "play is older than culture";<sup>8</sup> that is, people played even before they became part of an organized or recognized cultural group. He also suggested that play was responsible for more than the physical development of participants when he wrote:

. . . play is more than a mere physiological or psychological reflex. It goes beyond the confines of purely physical or purely

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<sup>7</sup>The internal characteristics of play include pursuit, strategy, enigma, vertigo, dexterity, etc., and were defined by K. Lansley, A Collection and Classification of Melanesian Play Activities---. Unpublished mimeographed Treatise, Faculty of Physical Education, University of Alberta, May, 1968. Definitions have been included in Appendix A, Part I, p. 179-180.

<sup>8</sup>Johan Huizinga, op. cit., p. 1.





biological activity. It is a 'significant' function--that is to say, there is some sense to it. In play there is something 'at play' which transcends the immediate needs of life and imparts meaning to the action. All play means something.<sup>9</sup>

Miller supported Huizinga's premise that play is multi-functional, particularly in primitive societies, when he stated: "In the primitive culture, play is the most adequate introduction to life, and imitation the indispensable medium by which that culture is made continuous, preserved, and may become the basis of further accumulation and increase."<sup>10</sup>

Bell stated that "the primitive child's school is its playground, and his playground is everywhere."<sup>11</sup>

The above examples of theories concerning play proposed by scholars in fields other than physical education, suggest that physical educators may make a significant contribution to more than the individual's biological and psychological development. They may also be contributing in a positive way to the survival of the culture in which they live, work, and play.

### Definition of Terms

A number of ambiguous and technical terms were used in the

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>N. Miller, The Child in Primitive Society, New York: Brentano's, 1928, p. 151.

<sup>11</sup>F. L. S. Bell, "The Play Life of the Tanga," Mankind, II, 3, p. 61.



study, and the definition of such terms, at this point, may alleviate unnecessary confusion. Terms were defined as follows:

Melanesia: that group of south-western Pacific islands including New Guinea, Torres Strait Islands, Admiralty Islands, New Britain, New Ireland, islands of the Bismark Archipelago, Solomon Islands, Trobriand Islands, Santa Cruz, New Hebrides Islands, New Caledonia, the Loyalty Islands, and those smaller islands within the immediate proximity of the above (See Map, Figure 1, p. 6).

Culture: the integral whole consisting of implements and consumer goods, of constitutional charters for the various social groupings, of human ideas and crafts, beliefs and customs.<sup>12</sup>

Society: the more or less complementary expectation sets in the minds of the members of the society, (i.e., in the minds of the individuals who carry that society), together with the relationships between those expectation sets.<sup>13</sup>

Cultural survival: the maintaining and perpetuating of all of the many facets of that particular culture.

Primitive: refers to a society which is small, has simple technology, is relatively unspecialized in social function, and generally

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<sup>12</sup>B. Malinowski, A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays, New York: Oxford University Press, 1960, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup>S. M. Piddocke, Lectures in Cultural Anthropology, University of Alberta, 1967-68.



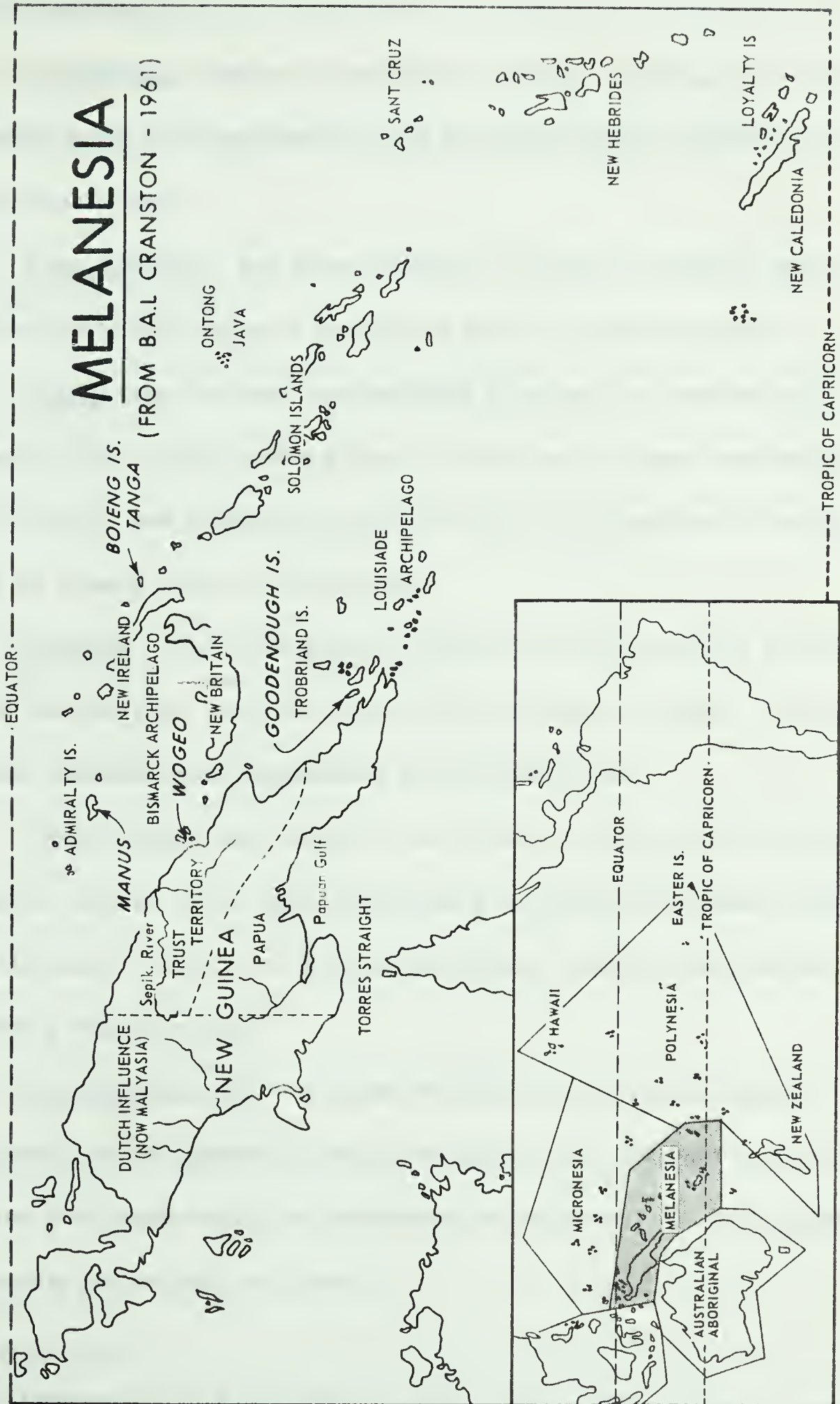


Figure 1





lacking in writing.<sup>14</sup>

Traditional: refers to opinions, beliefs, customs and activities handed down from ancestors, and excluding those introduced by European contacts.

Play Activity: any free activity, physical or mental, pursued for the satisfaction it affords during the period of participation.

Game: any recreational activity governed by temporary or permanent rules, which takes place in situations of fixed boundaries of time and space, and exhibits characteristics of competition by which winners or losers may be determined.

Pastime: any recreational activity in which there is an absence of competition, may or may not have temporary rules, and may take place outside fixed boundaries of time and space.

Team Game: any game in which two or more players compete against two or more opposing players so that the outcome of the game will depend on joint or collective efforts, and in which there is more than a single winner.

Individual Game: any game in which one person competes against another, or against a group, or against established norms or objectives contained within the structure of the game. In such a game there is only one winner or loser.

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<sup>14</sup>Lienhardt, Social Anthropology, New York: Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 1-2.





Group Pastime: any pastime in which two or more people participate simultaneously.

Individual Pastime: any pastime in which a single individual can obtain satisfaction.

### The Purpose of the Study

At the outset, the general purpose was to examine in detail Miller's suggestion that play, in primitive societies, was an effective means of preserving culture.<sup>15</sup> The limited time and source materials available, considered in conjunction with the complexity of a suitable technique, made achievement of this aim impossible. Consequently, it became necessary to narrow the problem to practical dimensions. The specific purpose therefore, was to discover to what extent, if any, twelve traditional Melanesian play activities (namely, canoeing, crossing the bridge, hide and seek, spear throwing, top spinning, handball, string figures, music, dancing, swinging, swimming, and finger games) contributed to the survival of traditional culture in four Melanesian societies (namely, Wogeo, Tanga, Goodenough Island and Manus).

### Schema for Describing Culture

Having established a specific aim which involved the maintenance of traditional Melanesian culture in four specific societies, it was necessary to establish the traditional cultural characteristics which

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<sup>15</sup>N. Miller, op. cit., p. 151.



existed, and may or may not have been maintained to some extent by traditional play activities. These characteristics were not immediately apparent and the following schema for describing culture was formulated:<sup>16</sup>

General Situation: this included the specific location of the societies; the topography, climate, and vegetation of the location; the distribution of the people over the area; the boundaries (if any) which governed the movements of the people; and the pattern of settlement (e.g., communal villages or isolated family habitations).

Ecological Situation: the particular aspects of society examined under this heading included production of goods and services; the degree of subsistence (self-sustenance) and economic integration (specialization and trade); the food quest (gathering, cultivation, domesticating livestock, hunting, and fishing); food habits and customs; artifacts, tools, mechanisms, and weapons; communications and forms of transport; and the distribution of goods and services (to whom, by whom, and for what).

Social Organization: this included the kinship system; political organization; law and social control; voluntary associations; property concepts; status concepts; and the modes of acquiring and losing

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<sup>16</sup>The schema was derived from the suggestions of the Royal Anthropological Institute (Notes and Queries on Anthropology, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 6th ed., 1951) and, for the purpose of this study, modified in consultation with Prof. Piddocke, Department of Anthropology, University of Alberta.



membership in the sub-groups with the society, and in the society at large.

World-view: this involved examining rituals and beliefs, religious beliefs and practices, magical beliefs and practices, witchcraft and sorcery; knowledge and tradition; symbolism; language (gesture and spoken language); art, music, and dance, which occurred outside the realm of recreational activities.

Life Cycle or Social Life of the Individual: this included general habits, customs and etiquette; personal care and decoration; clothing and nudity; habitations; training and education; marriage and family customs; old age, death and disposal of the dead.

### Eight Conditions Required for Cultural Survival

The question as to the extent of the contribution of play activities to the maintenance of culture as described by the above schema was facilitated by considering the general conditions considered necessary to maintain any culture. Eight such functional requisites were formulated<sup>17</sup> and these were:

1. The satisfaction (to a certain variable minimal level) of basic biological and psychological needs. This condition is concerned with the basic organic fitness which will enable individuals to

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<sup>17</sup>These conditions for cultural survival were determined in consultation with Prof. S. M. Piddocke, Department of Anthropology, University of Alberta, November 1967. (See also, B. Malinowski, op. cit., p. 91-136).





perform tasks necessary for daily living, and for a basic psychological adjustment necessary for these same individuals to fit into their respective societies.

2. Production, repair, replacement and distribution--where necessary--of material goods used in satisfying the individual's needs or cultural needs (i.e., those material goods required to maintain a particular way of life). As material goods will differ greatly in various societies depending on stage of development and environment, this requirement will also vary widely and will, therefore, be recognized only after a detailed study is made of specific communities within the cultural boundaries. If skills are lost to a society, and material goods of the traditional types are no longer produced or maintained, then the culture will change.

3. Maintenance of population--replacement of dead or departed carriers by new ones either by sexual reproduction or by immigration, which may be voluntary or forced. Cultural stability depends on an optimum level of population, and both population increase and depopulation can bring about major cultural changes.

4. Socialization or enculturation of new carriers into fully contributing carriers. The carriers of a culture are the individuals living within the culture and come into it either by birth or immigration. Such carriers must learn the social customs of their community, as the introduction of different socially acceptable behaviour will ultimately result in a change of culture.





5. Maintenance of a normative order (body of social expectations) by--

(a) propaganda--by reminding people what the expectations are, or

(b) sanctions--by rewarding compliance and punishing deviance.

6. Provision of leadership in emergency situations (sphere of authority) and an arrangement that people will follow such leaders. The emergency situations referred to may be natural (e.g., floods or droughts) or caused by man (e.g., wars). Leaders for such situations must be determined before the crisis arises so that the people of the cultural group can be organized in order to have the best possible chance of survival.

7. Maintenance of a communication system so that the channels of communication are kept open and the language remains stable. This system of communication is the vehicle for educating new carriers and also for applying meaning to objects and beliefs held within the culture. If the means of communication are lost, or change, then the culture will also change.

8. Maintenance of a common world-view or philosophy of life. The world-view refers to sets of ideas in people's minds, the symbol system of the culture, religious ritual, ideological myths, legends and kinship. This, then, is the deep knowledge acquired over a long period of time and is really the base on which culture is



structured.

Changes in any of the above conditions will effect changes in the remaining conditions, either in the long or short term, and ultimately affect the world-view of the individuals forming the particular cultural group. When this occurs culture has changed and a new culture is formed. This phenomenon is illustrated when traditional Melanesian culture is compared to contemporary Melanesian culture in the Australian-influenced City of Port Moresby.

### Methods and Procedures

A collection of traditional Melanesian play activities was compiled and classified as a preliminary study for this thesis.<sup>18</sup> One hundred and eighteen different activities were described, classified, and geographically located in Melanesia. The reports of ethnographers were used for describing traditional Melanesian play, and the locations were noted because all activities were not common to all societies (e.g., canoeing was not reported as one of the play activities of central New Guinea). Geographical location was also important for the selection of the activities and societies to be studied in detail.

The classification system used was four dimensional but only the first dimension of 'basic organization' was used for this study. The first dimension of the classification system was based on the

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<sup>18</sup>K. Lansley, A Collection and Classification of Melanesian Play---, Appendix A, p. 174.



general characteristics of the activity and was designed to determine if the activity was a game or pastime, and whether it was played by teams, groups, or individuals.

After the play activities were collected and sorted according to the first dimension of the classification system, twelve activities were selected on the basis of:

1. those which, in the opinion of the author, appeared most likely to have made a contribution to the maintenance of traditional Melanesian culture;
2. activities which were described in the ethnographical reports available;
3. activities which appeared to be most commonly recurring throughout the geographical area;
4. a variety of types of activities so that the four sub-classifications of individual game, team game, individual pastime, and group pastime (these were the available alternatives in the first dimension of the classification system used) were represented in the study.

When the play activities had been selected, four societies were chosen according to the following criteria:

1. their geographical location in relation to the twelve selected play activities, and
2. sufficient ethnographical information to determine the





cultural characteristics as previously outlined.<sup>19</sup>

The organization and treatment of the material outlined above is illustrated in Figure 2 (p. 16). The study began with a collection of traditional Melanesian play activities (Part "a"), which were classified into four groups (Part "b"). From these groups twelve specific activities were chosen according to the established criteria (Part "c"), and the contribution of these activities to maintaining traditional culture in four societies (Part "d") was examined. Finally, the contribution of the twelve activities to the maintenance of traditional Melanesian culture in the four societies was considered collectively in an attempt to observe any emerging pattern regarding the contribution of play to the preservation of an established culture (Part "e").

#### Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

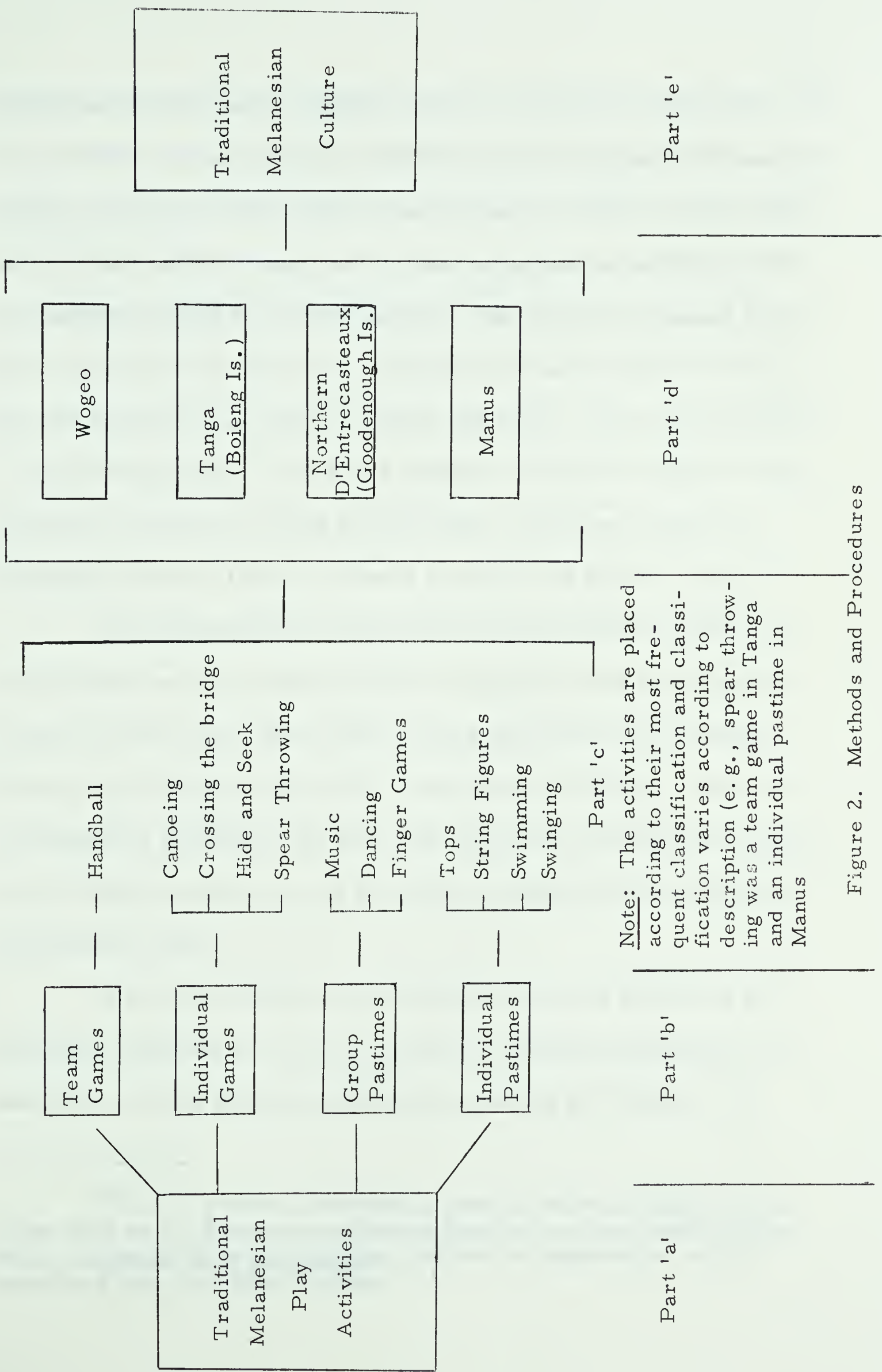
The study was seriously limited by the tendency of ethnographers each to study different societies, rather than those previously studied by earlier field-workers. A great deal of ethnographic work was carried out in Melanesia during the 1930's, but only in rare

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<sup>19</sup>Ethnographical reports from 24 Melanesian societies or geographical areas were considered before the final selection was made; they were, south coast of British New Guinea, Wogeo, Guadalcanal, Manus, Torres Strait Island (including Mer), Hall Sound, Aroma, Gaile, Moresby Straits (including Northern D'Entrecasteaux), Tanga, Motu, Hula, Maile, Cloudy Bay, Central Upland New Guinea, Dobu, Solomon Islands, Sepik Basin, Eastern Papua, New Britain, New Ireland, Trans-Fly, Mount Medawa, and Taba Island.







Note: The activities are placed according to their most frequent classification and classification varies according to description (e.g., spear throwing was a team game in Tanga and an individual pastime in Manus)

Figure 2. Methods and Procedures



instances were the same societies studied by different ethnographers.<sup>20</sup> Collectively, the many reports available describe a general Melanesian culture, but as yet these reports have not been so used. As this study is concerned with the traditional culture of particular societies, such a compilation would be of little benefit. The limitation imposed by the above phenomena is, therefore, a lack of sources suitable for checking and substantiating material used in the thesis. As it was usual for a single ethnographer to work in a specific society, his reports of that particular society can hardly be questioned, and these reports unavoidably form the literary evidence on which this study is based.

The ethnographical reports often failed to describe play activity in detail and many were written in languages other than English; cultural reports from those island groups administered by Germany, France, and Holland, were rarely translated into English. Because of translation limitations the study was delimited to references written in the English language, and a great deal of pertinent information was undoubtedly missed.

A further difficulty arose in determining the difference between play activities and work activities in traditional Melanesia; for example, deciding whether children were fishing for pleasure, or

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<sup>20</sup>R. F. Fortune conducted a study on Manus religion at the same time as M. Mead was collecting data for her later publications (e.g., Growing Up in New Guinea), but this is explainable, as Dr. Mead was then also Mrs. Fortune.



because of economic necessity.

The factors which forced the study to be delimited to an examination of only twelve activities, and of only four societies, increased the difficulty of drawing general conclusions about the role of play in maintaining traditional Melanesian culture.





## CHAPTER II

### WOGEO

#### General Situation

The small island of Wogeo is situated just off the northern coast of British New Guinea. This group of islands is volcanic in origin and has fertile soils and a mountainous topography. Wogeo, although only sixteen miles in circumference, has two mountains, Ilodap and Yanasora, estimated to be more than thirteen hundred feet high.<sup>1</sup> The rainfall exceeds one hundred and eighty inches per year and, with the rich basaltic soils, results in the island being densely covered with tropical rain forests. The food quest rarely presents a very serious problem because cultivated food plants, such as paw-paws, bananas and coconuts, also grow wild and occur in great profusion.

Wogeo is divided into the five tribal districts of Bukdi, Takul, Ga, Bagian and Wonevaro. Within each district the population is spread along the coast. Since the cultural information collected for this chapter is taken from Hogbin's 1934 field reports,<sup>2</sup> a large proportion of

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<sup>1</sup>H. I. Hogbin, "Native Culture of Wogeo: Report of Field Work in New Guinea," Oceania, V, p. 309.

<sup>2</sup>(a) Ibid., p. 308-337.

(b) H. I. Hogbin, "Tillage and Collection," Oceania, IX, No. 2, December 1938, p. 127-151, 286-325.

(c) H. I. Hogbin, "Land Tenure in New Guinea," Oceania, X, No. 2, December 1939, p. 113-165.



the material refers particularly to the village of Dap in the Wonevaro district.

Hogbin described Dap as being "fairly large" with a population of approximately sixty people. The houses which made up the village were grouped around the Men's House and each family had a separate homestead. Within the village further sub-groupings took place as members of particular clans tended to build their houses close to each other and were somewhat separated from those of other clans occupying the same village.

Physically, the people of Wogeo vary in color from very dark to light brown, but generally are of medium stature with thick, tightly curled black hair. Hogbin also found them to be "extremely temperamental."<sup>3</sup>

### Ecological Situation

A division between internal and general ecological organization was apparent from Hogbin's 1934 field reports of the "native culture of Wogeo."<sup>4</sup> Internal organization was the way in which the ecological activities were practised within villages or districts; the general organization was the more encompassing ecological situation existing throughout Wogeo and adjoining cultural groups which may

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<sup>3</sup>H. I. Hogbin, "Native Culture of Wogeo," op. cit., p. 314.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 308-337.



have directly affected the cultural pattern of the people of Dap. For the purpose of this study, the internal ecological situation is more significant to the understanding of the traditional culture of the people of Dap and, therefore, only those external factors of direct and immediate consequence have been included.

The division of labour in Dap was consistent with the general pattern in Melanesia. For example, women performed the usual tasks of keeping house, cooking, gathering, and tending the gardens. Men were responsible for the heavier work of clearing and making the gardens, building houses and canoes, hunting, fishing and of providing tools and utensils necessary for daily living. Within this general division of labour there was very little further specialization except for the kokwal,<sup>5</sup> who was responsible, according to the local belief system, for the spiritual aid needed for crop growth, cure of illnesses, successful hunting and fishing expeditions, and any phenomena over which the Wogeon had little or no control. Some very skilled carvers also specialized and traded their handiwork within the village or its immediate neighbourhood. Older men, experienced in Sago washing, similarly specialized in a minor way. Such men were not full-time carvers or sago washers and were still responsible for their regular

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<sup>5</sup>The kokwal was the head of the clan and more details regarding his appointment, powers, and responsibilities are given under the heading of Social Organization.





tasks within the household and the village. Households were responsible for their own sustenance and, therefore, had each a garden in which the crops were similar to those being cultivated in the gardens of every other household.

Special tasks were sometimes undertaken as a clan project organized by the kokwal of the clan. Such projects included the building of canoes for inter-island trade, the construction of a men's house or the making of a special garden in preparation for a coming feast. The kokwal required each man of his clan to spend a certain amount of time on such projects when the need arose, but his demands were never so great as to leave the man no time to attend to his regular household chores.

The people of Wogeo, and particularly those of Dap and other east and south coast villages, made frequent but not regular trading trips to the New Guinea mainland. Such trips were organized so that the Wogeons could trade their food surpluses (nuts and fish in particular), fishing and animal trapping nets, and net carrying-bags for such items as cooking pots, a variety of tools, bamboo, cosmetics and ornaments.

In any so-called primitive society the quest for food is of utmost importance in ecological organization. Food is obtained by means of gathering, cultivating, domesticating animals, hunting, or fishing, and all methods were employed by the Wogeon of Dap.

The women, casually assisted by the older children, were



generally responsible for gathering foods such as coconuts, canarium, almonds, breadfruits, tropical fruits, and marine life from the beaches and rock pools. The palolo worm, considered a delicacy by the Wogeon, was obtained at a special time of the year and in this form of gathering which was almost indistinguishable from a hunting activity, the women were assisted by the men.

The cultivation of crops was the most important and successful means of providing daily food requirements. The men cleared the land for their household garden, and the women assisted by clearing lighter undergrowth and collecting bushes and small trees chopped down by the men. Fences were built around the gardens to protect them from pigs, and finally plots were made for all members of the households. The principal crops grown were taro, bananas, sugar cane and tobacco; these were maintained and harvested by the women as indicated earlier. Because the land was only used once, the men were continually involved with cleaning and fencing new gardens. However, some clan gardens, which provided food for festive occasions and supervised personally by the kokwal, were tended by the men of the clan.

Hogbin mentions occasional hunting of wild pigs, but conveys the impression that such activities were limited due to the increased domestication of pigs and the marked decrease in the numbers of wild pigs available to hunt.

Fishing was practised throughout the whole year but never to



the extent that men neglected their land clearing and fence-making activities. Methods varied, but the most common way to catch fish was either by using short lines from the canoes, or night fishing with flares and hand nets.

Taro and bananas were the staple foods of Wogeon people and formed the basis of the evening meal of stew. Fruits, nuts, sago, and yams were eaten to a lesser degree, and pork, because the number of pigs owned by an individual was a status conveying factor, was a particular delicacy only to be enjoyed at special feasts. Dogs and lizards were eaten on rare occasions; and although sea-food was abundant, the natives did not eat much of it.

The natives of Wogeo did not produce a great variety of artifacts, but when supplemented by those traded from the New Guinea mainland, they provided adequately for the daily requirements of the people. The basic tools used were the stone adze, stone axes, shell and bone knives and digging sticks. Bows and arrows, clubs and spears were used for hunting and also for warfare when the occasion arose.

Canoes, the main form of transport, were used for communicating with neighbouring coastal settlements for trade or social occasions; for movement to the reefs for fishing; and for traversing longer distances for trading transactions with the New Guinea mainland. War canoes were also important for the defence of the island, and for war-raids undertaken against hostile neighbouring islanders. Internal





waterways were unsuitable for canoe traffic and land transportation consisted of walking on narrow paths hacked out of the hungle. Women usually carried produce from the gardens in large baskets slung from woven bands around their foreheads, but the men preferred to carry such objects on their shoulders.

### Social Organization

The Wogeon people recognized a patrilineal system of kinship, but two exagamous matrilineal divisions cut across the society independently of the existing patrilineal association. These matrilineal divisions were similar to moieties with special ceremonial obligations. Therefore, from the total viewpoint, kinship was a simple double system of descent.

Political organization was based on the large number of patrilineal clans which existed in the society (each patrilineal clan consisted of the adult men and their families who had descended directly from common parents. Therefore, when one generation of males died, new clans were formed and the size of the clan varied from generation to generation). Each clan was governed by its kokwal who gained his position by inheritance. Usually, the ruling kokwal of the clan was the eldest son of the preceding kokwal's first wife but this was not always so, as younger sons with more forceful personalities often replaced the rightful heir. Each village contained two or three different clans and rivalry often developed between the ruling kokwals as the best



kokwal (i.e., the one having most control over the supernatural) was frequently able to dominate village policies regarding issues of trade, feasts, and wars.

Within Wogeo, social control and law were maintained by means of sorcery. Fear of sorcery (sorcery could be attempted with some hope of success by any adult) regulated behaviour. The kokwal demanded obedience from his own clan and because of his extra magical powers he was able to achieve respect. Laws were broken but most, if not all, crimes could be alleviated if the guilty adequately compensated the injured party. If such compensation was not forthcoming bloodshed and death sometimes occurred as the injured party sought suitable revenge.

Ownership of property was an important aspect of the social scene in Wogeo. Because cultivation provided the major proportion of food for the inhabitants, land was particularly valuable and passed from one generation to the next. Possession of magical powers was also an asset and these powers, in the form of chants and magical rites, were handed down to boys by their fathers and their father's brothers to be jealously guarded for coming generations. Crops were also individually owned; the men owned the bananas, and the women owned all the crops they themselves planted and cared for. Almond and breadfruit trees were claimed regardless of where they grew as these were important tradeable commodities. Pigs, as among other Melanesian groups, were the chief wealth objects.



Although the kokwal was the only person to enjoy a completely elevated status within his clan, a certain degree of social stratification did occur according to wealth. Much prestige was gained by conducting successful feasts, and as Hogbin points out "food has become associated with personal prestige, status and vanity."<sup>6</sup>

Membership of associations such as clans was a birthright, but due to a high percentage of sterility, adoption was prevalent. Once children were born, they were established as fully contributing members of society by initiation. Since first menstruation for girls was considered to be a sign of adulthood, they were not subjected to any special rites. Boys, however, were required to bleed for their admission to society and a protracted series of rites was culminated by cutting the boys' tongues in order to free them of their mothers' blood and to render their tongues supple for playing the sacred flutes. Marriage meant a change of association for women who left their homes for the villages and clans of their husbands. In this situation the women did not lose all association with their childhood homes but loyalties were expected to transfer to their husbands' clans.

### World-View

The natives of Wogeo believed that bleeding was the best way to cleanse the body and that women were therefore able to cleanse

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<sup>6</sup>H. I. Hogbin, "Tillage and Collection," op. cit., p. 325.







themselves each time they menstruated. Men, however, had to incise their penises to achieve a similar result, and after building a pig net, burying a man, or fathering a new born child, such bleeding was thought necessary to avoid contamination. This bleeding was always accompanied by an abstinence from sexual relations.

Spirits were important in the lives of the Wogeo but no spirit was believed to be capable of, or responsible for protecting those on earth. Nanarangs were considered to be dangerous spirits capable of causing minor illnesses but not nearly as dangerous as the reigning kokwal's power of sorcery, witchcraft and magic. Magical spells were implemented with a special rite of which the wording was considerably shorter and simpler than found elsewhere in Melanesia. These spells were often conveyed by the magician through material objects such as a particular stone, fruit, or personal ornament to the objective of his endeavours. Anything involving inexplicable misfortune or illness was usually blamed on sorcery and could therefore only be counteracted by even more powerful sorcery or magic.

Music and dance played an important role in the spiritual and magical beliefs and practices of the natives of Wogeo. Nibeks, sacred flutes similar to pan pipes, were held as a symbolic representation of the voices of the dead and the learning of their traditions and manipulations formed an important part of male initiation ceremonies. On occasions bull-roarers, leaf whistles and bamboo trumpets also served as nibeks. Instruments so designated could only be played with the



permission of the kokwal and approximately two weeks passed between recitals. Specified dances called lewas also had nibek properties. Performances of these dances were held to place special taboos on certain foods and to do homage to the "bush spirit",<sup>7</sup> and, in Dap, "the spirit of the old woman."<sup>8</sup> Unlike nibeks, lewas were sometimes performed by men and women. Such ceremonial dances were accompanied only by the slit gong and drums.

### Individual Social Life

Many of the factors affecting the day to day social life of the natives of Wogeo have been mentioned above, but certain characteristics remain significant for a more complete understanding of traditional Wogeo culture.

Clothing and personal ornaments were important to the individuals once adulthood was attained. Prior to initiation, boys particularly went nude, as did the younger girls. Following their initiation, when they were approximately fourteen years old, boys, who were then considered adult, had the front of their heads shaved and the hair on the back of their head thrust into a basket cone.

Education and training were only formal at the time of initiation, when the young men and women were instructed by their elders

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<sup>7</sup>H. I. Hogbin, "Native Culture of Wogeo," op. cit., p. 324-325.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.



in spiritual matters. Practical education was informal and children were taught by example and learned by imitation.

Attitudes to sex were generally lax and pre-marital sexual relations were condoned so long as these activities were not too openly indulged in. Extra-marital relationships were not uncommon but adulterers, if apprehended, were required to make heavy compensatory payments to the injured party or their immediate kin. The Wogeons had a reasonably accurate knowledge of conception and had no magical beliefs concerning childbirth. They did believe that constant association with the same partner was needed to produce a child.

Marriage was theoretically well organized but contrary to accepted conventions, marriages did take place between people of the same moiety and, on rare occasions, within the same clan. Girls were provided with a dowry of land and while elopement was the most common form of matrimony, marriages also took place following childhood betrothals, capture and common agreement. Polygyny was permissible, and the ability to support more than one wife was considered a sign of affluence.

Death, which was invariably attributed to sorcery, was accompanied by organized mourning. Hogbin stated that mourners were arranged in groups and special tasks were allocated to the kin of the deceased. Bodies were buried either in the center of the village or under the houses of the deceased, and once interred their spirits were believed to have departed to live on the special island inhabited by the







nanarangs.

### Play Activities of Wogeo

Five of the twelve play activities selected for study were reported from the island of Wogeo. These activities were canoeing, spear throwing, string figures, music and swimming. Unfortunately, they are not described fully by Hogbin,<sup>9</sup> but an effort has been made to provide missing detail by referring to similar activities described more fully by other ethnographers working in Melanesia.<sup>10</sup>

#### 1. Canoeing

Model canoes were sometimes raced by the children of Dap. Older boys and youths were generally the participants and the men of the society criticized, judged, and later evaluated the effort of the contestants. Hogbin does not mention any specific rules, but since races were held, starting and finishing lines must have been determined. The size and design of the canoes were optional but were, in all probability, imitations of the larger canoes used for local and inter-island transportation.

The material apparatus needed for the activity included, model canoes which were constructed from wood or hollowed coconut shells,

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<sup>9</sup>H. I. Hogbin, "A New Guinea Childhood . . . , " Oceania, XVI, June 1946, p. 275-296.

<sup>10</sup>For example, H. Maude and C. H. Wedgwood, "String Figures from Northern New Guinea, " Oceania, XXXVII, 1967, p. 202-228.



the sails, and a suitable place to play; this was provided by the shallow waters just out from the beach.

The men who watched these model canoe races not only instructed the participants but were also interested spectators who undoubtedly enjoyed the spectacle and the speculation.

The contribution of model canoe racing to the survival of the traditional culture of Wogeo is obvious when the importance of the canoe for communication and trade is considered. The young men of Wogeo had to be skilled in the handling of canoes and to know how these canoes should be constructed for maximum efficiency and speed. Building models of the larger trading canoes and then having their abilities not only tested, but also criticized, by experienced sailors, was undoubtedly significant in maintaining the production, repair, and replacement of material goods which were essential for the propagation of the culture.

## 2. Spear Throwing

Hogbin does not make mention of anyone but the young boys having informal spear throwing competitions. Rules and objectives have once again been omitted in the available references, but targets were apparently chosen, and contestants required to throw from at least an arbitrary minimum distance. Since Hogbin states that birds often served as targets for bow and arrow shooting,<sup>11</sup> spears were

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<sup>11</sup>H. I. Hogbin, "A New Guinea Childhood," op. cit., p. 277.



probably also aimed at similar live targets, especially by the older boys.

The spears were usually made from reeds and were manufactured as required, only to be discarded once the game was completed. Nothing has been mentioned to suggest that spear throwing occurred in any particular location and competitions were probably impromptu events that took place in and around the villages, in abandoned gardens, or in jungle clearings.

Occasionally boys would stage mock spear battles with each other or in teams. When teams were formed by the older boys, leadership was assumed by the sons of the kokwals and "although other made suggestions, theirs was the final decision about what should be done."<sup>12</sup>

Games involving spear throwing contributed directly to the maintenance of Wogeon culture as the spear was the principal weapon and hunting instrument of the natives. Boys were expected to be proficient in handling this device by the time they reached the age of initiation so that as men they would be able to provide food and protect their society from invasion. If Wogeo could not be protected any group occupying the island could change the culture in a great variety of ways (e.g., introduction of new and different spiritual beliefs, gardening practices, language, etc.).

War games involving spears also gave the participants an

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid. p. 278.





understanding of war techniques and practice in war leadership and discipline. The son of the kokwal became a leader recognized by his contemporaries and therefore set the foundation for continued political stability.

### 3. String Figures

Making string figures was a favourite individual pastime of the girls and younger children of Wogeo. Older girls became expert at this complicated activity and often amused the younger children placed in their care by teaching them new figures and demonstrating their prowess in performing the more difficult.<sup>13</sup> Hogbin makes no mention of this pastime being practised by the adults or older boys of Wogeo, but indicated that parents were interested in learning of new tricks and figures mastered by their children.

There do not appear to have been any rules governing this amusement but the objectives were clearly to copy a set procedure in order to produce a recognizable symbolic representation of some known object. The play activity was practised anywhere a group of children was able to sit quietly and the only material apparatus needed was a loop of string. The people of Wogeo were skilled weavers and net makers so obtaining the necessary string should not have presented a serious problem.

Hogbin does not describe the figures and tricks he observed in

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid. p. 276.



Wogeo but the included diagrams (Figure 3, p. 36) observed by Camilla H. Wedgwood<sup>14</sup> provide some indication of the complexity of the figures and the types of things represented.

The contribution of string figures to the maintenance of the traditional culture of Wogeo is difficult to assess from the information available. However, symbolism can be considered an important aspect of the world-view of a society, and any activity which fosters understanding of symbolism should therefore contribute to the maintenance of a traditional appreciation of this aspect of culture.

As the natives of Wogeo relied heavily on their abilities as net makers and weavers to provide for their daily needs both directly and through trade, string figures could also have contributed to adult preparation by developing the manual dexterity needed to manipulate string into desired forms.

The above propositions concerning the contribution of this play activity are debatable and not easily supported as it is difficult to imagine any significant change in the society caused by the removal of string figures. Consequently, while it is suggested that string figures may contribute to the survival of the traditional culture, it is also suggested that, considering the information available, any contribution is not really significant.

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<sup>14</sup>H. Maude and C. H. Wedgwood, "String figures from Northern New Guinea, " op. cit., p. 202-228.





"The Marriage"



"Stars"



"The Clam"

Figure 3. An example of string-figures observed in Northern New Guinea (Maude and Wedgwood 1967).





#### 4. Music

Hogbin makes particular mention of the youths in their early teens devoting their evenings to the recreational activity of sitting and singing or playing the flute and band-drum.<sup>15</sup> The smaller children were not skilled in playing these instruments but nevertheless frequently joined in as best they could. Adults were apparently more reserved and only indulged in musical recreation on festive occasions and only then as a means of providing accompaniment for dances which were performed.

Music was a definite pastime as rules and competitions were absent. The objective was essentially imitation of traditional music forms, plus variations which proved pleasing and acceptable.

The material apparatus used was a short drum made from a hollow piece of wood and lizard skin, and flutes made from hollow reeds or bamboo. From the description of the nibek pipes,<sup>16</sup> these flutes were probably similar to pan-pipes. However some differences must have existed because the nibek pipes were sacred and could only be played with the consent of the kokwal.

The songs which were sung were usually chants influenced considerably by the spiritual chants used in magic and sorcery. The younger children often imitated the spiritual songs and music endeavours

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<sup>15</sup>H. I. Hogbin, "A New Guinea Childhood," op. cit., p. 278.

<sup>16</sup>See musical contributions to World-View - p. 28.





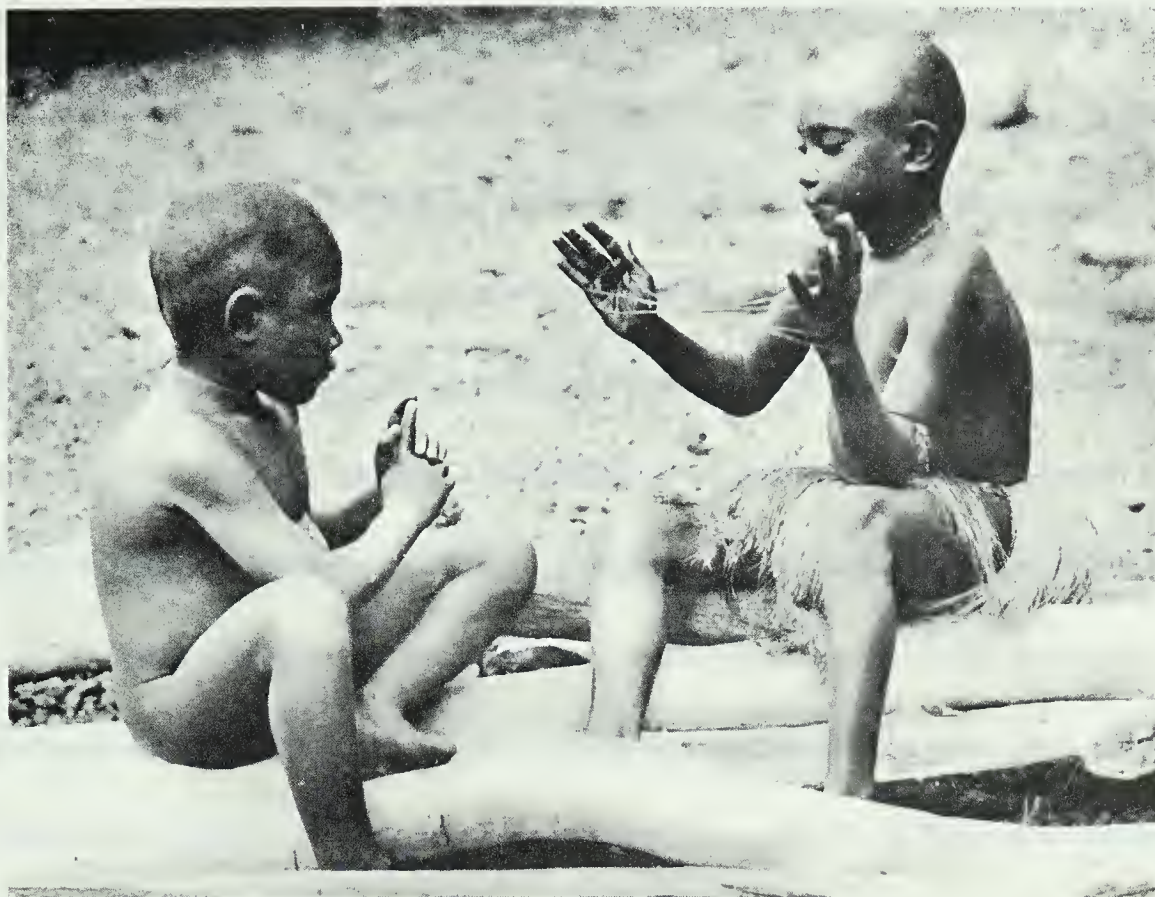


Figure 4. Children playing string-figures in Wogeo (Hogbin, 1946).



Figure 5. A ceremonial dance in Wogeo (Hogbin, 1951).





of their elders but such action was not tolerated once the child reached sufficient maturity to know better. Hogbin intimated that this stage was reached when the child was approximately eight years old.

Music, as pointed out earlier in this chapter, was a very important part of traditional Wogeo culture, and consequently the recreational music practised by the children helped prepare them for their adult roles in their society. The spiritual and symbolic values of music were learnt and appreciated by children from their earliest years so that this play activity contributed directly to the maintenance of the common world-view and to the socialization of the new members of Wogeo into full contributing carriers.<sup>17</sup>

## 5. Swimming

The climate and location of Wogeo helped to make swimming a very popular recreational activity. Although Hogbin tells only of children swimming for pleasure, youths, adults and old people also probably swam during their periods of relaxation. Very little detail has been provided concerning swimming as a play activity and hence it is impossible to say whether it ever became a competitive game rather than just a pastime. Certainly, in villages such as Dap, swimming was almost essential for survival, so that the objective of the pastime would have been to be able to swim.

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<sup>17</sup>Music is invariably accompanied by dance, but the ethnographer made no mention of recreational dance in Wogeo societies.





The only material apparatus needed was a place to swim, and for people living on the coast of an island surrounded by a coral reef, this did not present any problem. Ethnographers reporting on swimming in other parts of Melanesia noted that children usually swam in the nude,<sup>18</sup> and this was also probably true of the children of Wogeo.

Recreational swimming, learning to swim, and water games contributed greatly to the maintenance of culture in Wogeo because the natives relied on the sea not only for variations in diet, but also as a means of communication. Therefore, even though the children of Wogeo probably swam "just for fun," they were contributing to the survival of a traditional culture bound very closely to the sea.

The five play activities examined above appear to have made a significant contribution to the survival of traditional culture in Wogeo. Had the activities been more fully described by the ethnographer working in this area, then a more worthwhile assessment could have been made. Children's games and pastimes will almost invariably contain an aspect of socialization or enculturation, particularly in societies such as Dap where little or no emphasis is placed on formal teaching of practical day to day activities.

Only the main contributions of the activities to cultural

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<sup>18</sup>F. L. S. Bell, "Play Life of the Tangan," Mankind, II, January 1937, p. 56-61.



survival have been noted as all conditions are closely inter-related, and if, for example, an activity contributed to socialization, it would also have contributed to the maintenance of a normative order. Of the twelve activities chosen for study in this thesis Hogbin reported only five, and all appeared to have promoted, in some way, the survival of the traditional culture. Swimming, model-canoe racing and spear-throwing appeared significant in maintaining the material culture. Music was important to the maintenance of the common world-view. String figures may have had a dual role of maintaining traditional cultural characteristics in both materialistic (working with string) and philosophical aspects of Wogoon life (symbolism).



## CHAPTER III

### TANGA

#### General Situation

The preponderance of material for Tanga is taken from Bell's field reports, collected in 1933. Bell established his headquarters on Boieng Island, "a crescent-shaped coral outcrop about ten miles long and two miles wide,"<sup>1</sup> which is the most easterly of the Tanga Islands located in the Bismark Archipelago (See Map, Figure 1). His cultural observations apply more specifically to Boieng Island than to Tanga, though his articles suggest that the material is representative of the entire group of islands.<sup>2, 3, 4, 5</sup>

Boieng has volcanic and limestone soils which, together with average temperatures of approximately 80° F and an average daily rainfall of 38 points, cause the island to be covered with dense tropical

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<sup>1</sup>F. L. S. Bell, "Report of Field Work in Tanga," Oceania, IV, p. 292.

<sup>2</sup>F. L. S. Bell, "Warfare Among the Tanga," Oceania, V, p. 253-279.

<sup>3</sup>F. L. S. Bell, "The Place of Food in the Social Life of the Tanga," Oceania, XVII, p. 139-172.

<sup>4</sup>F. L. S. Bell, "The Play Life of the Tanga: Part I," Mankind, II, 3, p. 56-61.

<sup>5</sup>F. L. S. Bell, "The Play Life of the Tanga: Part II," Mankind, II, 4, p. 83-86.





rain forests. Tropical fruits and nuts, similar to those in Wogeo, grow wild and also form the basic agricultural crops. Unlike Wogeo, Boieng Island has an abundance of bamboo which provides excellent raw material for many of the artifacts manufactured by the natives.

The small native settlements, rarely containing more than twelve people, were scattered around the hillsides and mountain-tops and not on the coast, as in Wogeo. Tall bamboo stockades were constructed around the villages and the village gardens. Within the settlement the acknowledged chief occupied a large central dwelling which overlooked the public square. This area was maintained for feasts, ceremonies, and burials of deceased members of the village.

The people were of medium height, were sturdily built, had frizzy hair, and varied from black to light-coffee in skin color. Bell described them as "jovial people, with decided powers of mimicry, --and with quick a wit as will be found among our own people."<sup>6</sup>

### Ecological Situation

Each household formed a single economic unit. The women were responsible for gathering, collecting, and the household duties. The men built houses, canoes, household utensils, and tools; they also hunted, fished, prepared the gardens, and, with help from the women, cultivated and harvested the produce of these gardens. Occasionally

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<sup>6</sup>F. L. S. Bell, "Reports on Field Work in Tanga," op. cit., p. 295.



households combined, under the direction of the village chiefs, for major tasks such as growing food for a combined feast, or building a large canoe for inter-island transportation.

Specialized services were provided by assassins who could be hired to settle feuds. Garden-magicians (magicians responsible for providing spells which would ensure successful harvests) could also specialize, and they, together with the assassins, were paid in shell money for their services. Like the part-time specialist sago-washers and sorcerers of Wogeo, the assassins and magicians of Tanga also had to maintain their respective households and perform the daily tasks required of all men.

Providing food was the principal task of all adults in Boieng, and they used the common Melanesian methods of gathering, cultivating, domesticating animals, hunting, and fishing to meet their daily food requirements. Women used net carrying bags to hold tropical fruits and nuts (betel nut was the most important product of their gathering excursions; it was chewed by men, women and children, and, because of its popularity, was an excellent article of trade) gathered from the forests, and a variety of shellfish gathered from salt-water rock pools.

The cultivation of family gardens was the most important and time-consuming job of adult Tangans. The division of agricultural labour was based on the sex of the adult workers. Men cleared and fenced the ground; women, often assisted by the older children and



occasionally by the men, planted and harvested the crops. Yams, the staple food in Boieng, was the principal crop. Tobacco, sugar-cane, fruits and taro were grown to a lesser extent than elsewhere in Melanesia. The gardens yielded only one crop before being abandoned. Consequently, the men of the village had constantly to clear and barricade new gardens.

Each man living on Boieng Island owned at least one pig which served as a show of wealth and also as a source of food. Because of the importance of the pig as a status symbol, Tangans ate pork only on festive or ceremonial occasions.

"However, as these occasions are frequent, and as it is customary at a feast to take home the better part of one's portion, it might be said that pork is quite an ordinary item in the Tangan diet."<sup>7</sup>

Domesticated fowl were also kept principally for their feathers, which were used extensively for personal adornment, rather than for their flesh or the eggs.

Hunting did not form a major part of the food quest but youths occasionally hunted opossums and birds with bows and arrows, and slings. Fish, though abundant, did not contribute greatly to the Boieng Island people's diet because men were not skilled in catching or trapping them.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.







Food obtained by the above methods was cooked before being eaten. Most foods were boiled in sea water even though fresh water was plentiful. Sea water was used because of its salt content; salt was unavailable in any other form on Boieng Island. Two main meals were taken daily, but the people supplemented their diet with fruits and nuts picked and eaten raw between meals. Coconuts were used daily in a variety of ways and it was customary to drink coconut water with most meals.

The natives of Boieng Island manufactured their own tools, weapons, and utensils when the need arose. Natural objects such as coconut shells, bones, stones, and sea-shells were used extensively. In the manufacture of articles used in daily living, the emphasis was placed on functionalism rather than beauty. Digging sticks and stone axes were the principal tools, but scrapers, shell knives, and fishing lines were often made for everyday use.

The natives constructed their weapons with great care. The main articles of war were clubs, and seven varieties of spears designed for throwing and thrusting. Bell described the war club thus:

The Tangan club is a two-handed weapon, and is wielded somewhat in the manner of the Japanese single-stick. A blow from such a club, although likely to cause a serious wound, would hardly result in death.<sup>9</sup>

Axes, which were principally domestic tools, were also used for

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<sup>9</sup>F. L. S. Bell, "Warfare Among the Tangan," op. cit., p. 277.



hand-to-hand fighting. Bows and arrows and slings, although used in warfare, were not considered by Bell to have been real weapons.

While everyday artifacts were plain, a great number of symbolic decorations adorned the weapons of the Tangans and certain designs were reserved for specific articles. For example, clubs were decorated with several incised rings near the heavier end, and war-axes (those reserved exclusively for fighting) were decorated with coconut fibres.

Within their own settlements the Tangans exchanged goods and services by means of gifts, and local prestige was gained by generosity; the more a man gave away to neighbours the greater was his influence in local affairs because of his show of wealth. A form of currency made from clam-shells was used for a small number of transactions (e.g., employing the services of a specialist garden magician) but because of the social importance of gift-giving, money transactions and bartering were not extensive nor competitive amongst people living in the same or neighbouring villages. However, trading with people of neighbouring islands was extremely competitive and prestige was gained by shrewdness rather than by generosity. The best developed external trade relationship was established with the coastal people of New Ireland and frequent journeys were made in large sea-going canoes for the purpose of exchanging a variety of artifacts. The principal articles traded by the Boiengs were decorated bamboo utensils, betel-nut, and tobacco, which were exchanged for sea-foods and tools, which were of a better quality than those produced locally.



## Social Organization

The basic social group on Boieng Island was the individual family, made up of parents and their children. The family units combined in settlements to form sub-clans called matambias, all the members of which were held to be related matrilineally through a common ancestor. Matambias further combined to form a matrilineal clan funmat which was not only a kinship unit, but also a territorial unit.<sup>10</sup> The area of land occupied by a clan was subdivided into smaller geographical districts which were occupied by the sub-clans, and in which the families of the sub-clan were permitted to move and settle freely. The sub-clans were particularly jealous of their territorial rights, and any trespassing (or straying outside one's territory), if detected, usually lead to physical violence.

Laws and social controls were administered by the family unit, the recognized head of the matambia, or, in extreme cases, by the head of the clan. Wars and feuds were used to settle social wrongs and these were usually followed by an exchange of gifts which may or may not have been compensations paid by the guilty to the injured parties.

Bell<sup>11</sup> described three types of warfare as they existed in the

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<sup>10</sup>F. L. S. Bell, "Report on Field Work in Tanga," op. cit., p. 300.

<sup>11</sup>F. L. S. Bell, "Warfare Among the Tangan," op. cit., p. 256-265.







traditional culture of the Boieng Island natives. The first and most common form of warfare took place between people of the same clan, and often of the same matambia, and was fought in the manner of a duel. Duels usually resulted from arguments over such things as unfaithfulness of wives, or slander. Feuds were not fought by individuals but by the antagonists and their immediate family or sympathizers. The battles were spontaneous, and only light clubs, sticks, axe-handles, and occasionally slings were used so nobody was killed or very seriously injured. Feuds were followed by an exchange of compensatory gifts given by the victor to the defeated, and a feast was provided by the defeated for the victor.

Inter-clan warfare was not uncommon. Certain clans (e.g., the Tasik and Korofe clans) were perpetually hostile to each other and fought frequently with or without provocation. Conflicts of this type were usually carried out by a raiding party of fifty or sixty warriors who, after careful magical preparation, would steal into the adversaries' village before dawn and kill them as they slept. Such an attack usually led to a counter-attack and only occasionally was peace restored with a gift exchanging ceremony. In such encounters prisoners were not taken but the bodies of victims were carried back to the conqueror's village where they were ceremoniously cooked and eaten.

Foreign warfare was not frequently practised by the Tangans of Boieng, but Bell suggested that war expeditions were "sometimes made against Lihir and against people living on the mainland of New



Ireland.<sup>12</sup>

Ownership of property was extremely important to the Boieng islanders, and violation of property rights resulted in violence and warfare. Land was allocated to families rather than individuals inside the matambia enclosures, but further subdivision occurred when the head of each family allocated garden space to each of the members of his family. The division of ownership was no less strict at this level than at the clan level as each garden had a corresponding storehouse and the distribution of produce was closely supervised by its owner. Naturally occurring articles of value, such as fruit trees, coconuts, fish, or wildlife, were owned by the matambia within those area they were found and were administered by the matambia chief who acted on behalf of his particular sub-clan. The rule of ownership depended on production to a similar extent as found in Wogeon societies.

The amount of property owned or controlled by an individual largely determined his social status on Boieng Island. The concept of "big man" was similar to that of Wogeo and apart from being born a "big man" (chieftainship of clans and sub-clans was a hereditary position) a man could raise his social status by giving extravagant gifts or feasts on numerous occasions. Ownership of land for gardens, wives to work the gardens, and pigs, were essential for both gift and feast giving. A man's status could also be elevated if he gained repute as a

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.



successful warrior. Bravery was not always synonymous with success: Boieng Islanders were interested in results, and the hero of the battlefield was the man who killed the greatest number of enemy with the least possible risk.

Membership of a clan and a sub-clan was a birth or marriage right, but as among other Melanesian peoples, the young members of society were subjected to initiation ceremonies before being admitted as full adult members of the tribe. Girls were considered adults once they had their first menstruation but the initiation of boys was much more severe. At approximately fifteen years of age boys were introduced to Sokapana, a man-devouring ghost who terrified all the uninitiated, by a protracted series of rites climaxed by severe beatings with thin cane whips. The bleeding which followed these beatings was believed to cleanse the body, while the pains and humiliations of the ordeal were considered essential to smoulder the spirit necessary for survival in the battles which awaited the future warriors of Boieng.

### World-view

The natives of Boieng Island were very superstitious and had firm beliefs in the powers of magic, sorcery, and witchcraft. Established rites were performed with extreme care for all major events, and magical responses observed during such rites frequently determined the planned behaviour of the people. For example, a magical rite involving joint-cracking was performed to determine the leader's







victim before a revenge-raid.<sup>13</sup> The strong reliance of the people on garden-magic enabled successful magicians to supplement their income by selling specialized services to the less skilled or more unfortunate gardeners of his matambia.

There was an abundance of spirits available for the manipulation of the sorcerer as the people believed that every living animal, including man, had a spiritual counterpart which could leave the body at will. When a human died the spirit departed permanently and was then known as a kinit which wandered through the jungle at night and could be observed as a glow-worm or a fire-fly. Kinits were also believed to be in communication with tara and madas, the evil spirits held responsible for all the misfortunes which befell the natives.

The cannibalistic tendencies of the natives were based on ritual rather than a craving for human flesh. Warriors who succeeded in killing an enemy during a raid took the body back to their village where it was dissected, cooked, and eaten by the men of the tribe. The entire process was carried out according to a strict ritual, and the head of the victim was never eaten but was thrown away until it dried out, and finally placed in the men's house. Eating the flesh of defeated warriors was considered the extreme insult, but to avoid any danger of spiritual reprisals cannibalistic rituals were carried out as a group

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.



activity.

A form of totemism was a further example of the Boieng Islanders regard for symbolism and symbolic action. Clans usually identified themselves with a particular bird or animal and were known by other clans according to their symbolic representation. However, totemism was not so strict as to stop the natives from killing and eating their bird or animal symbol.

Music and dance also had symbolic connotations in Boieng as all-important rituals were accompanied by established dances and musical recitals. Music was particularly important in initiation ceremonies as the bull-roarers, lizard skin drums, and reed pipes not only assisted in the dance routines but were also used as representations of the spirits' voices. The dances of the Tangans were complicated and movements were strictly controlled by tradition. However, the general effectiveness or beauty of these dances<sup>14</sup> was such that visiting natives learned the steps and took them back to their own communities where they were performed for pleasure on festive occasions. Similarly, Boieng Islanders who were able to bring new dances and songs back to their clans gained great admiration and prestige.

#### Individual Social Life

Much of the daily social life of the Boieng islanders is :

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<sup>14</sup>F. L. S. Bell, "Report on Field Work in Tanga," op. cit., p. 303.



apparent from the above description, but certain other aspects not already mentioned contributed significantly to the traditional culture of the people.

Clothing and personal decoration were extremely important to the natives on festive occasions. Elaborate headdresses were made for such events from feathers. Bodies, previously scarred for beautification, were decorated with ornaments and a variety of mud-paints. Although decorations were important for festive occasions, the Boieng natives paid little attention to dress for day-to-day activities. Children, before initiation into the tribe, went completely naked. The standard apparel for men and women was a lap-lap.

Personal cleanliness was not considered to be of importance and accumulated grime and dirt was removed only by incidental rainstorms and swimming parties.

The habitations of the people reflected their warlike tendencies. Each settlement was solidly fortified by high fences of painted bamboo. The houses had heavy doors and low gabled roofs with pointed stakes protruding from the eaves. A settlement, usually set well back from the beach to lessen the danger of surprise attacks from the sea, was made up of family huts, food storage houses, a general cooking hut (which doubled as a sleeping hut for unmarried girls), and a men's sleeping hut which was easily recognized by its low arched, rather than gabled, roof.

Bell does not make any mention of any formal education







except during initiation. Children learned the skills of building, hunting, fishing, cooking, and gardening, by observing and imitating the actions of the adults. Much of the children's time was spent with their parents and their work responsibilities increased with age. By the time they reached adulthood they were expected to know the skills necessary for daily living and although education was not organized formally, it began as soon as the child was old enough to start learning and continued at no particular set rate until children knew all the basic skills and were able to innovate for themselves.

After children were initiated into the tribe, and boys, in particular, were taught the secrets of the spiritual world, they were considered ready for marriage. However, men did not marry for some time after their initiation as the young were not usually wealthy enough to support a wife. Infant betrothal was practised but rarely enforced if either party raised a serious objection at the time the marriage was to be consummated. The marriage ceremony was very simple and was usually only marked by a feast and a simple payment of a bride-price by the groom to the family of the bride.

Personal strength and power were important for status on Boieng Island and, therefore, the aged natives, unless successful sorcerers or magicians, were afforded little respect. The old people continued their contribution to their kin by making small utensils and ornamental articles for trade purposes.

Only dead warriors were given any special funeral rites; all



others were merely buried and forgotten. When a warrior died, his spirit was considered powerful and mischievous and the following ritual was considered necessary for the well-being of the survivors of the warrior. Following elaborate funeral rites and feasting, the weapons of the deceased were burned and the warrior was interred in a shallow grave. After approximately one month the body was exhumed and the bones were thoroughly cleaned. The skull was hung in the men's hut and as a culmination to a second feast the rest of the bones were buried forever at the base of a particular coconut tree. The fruit of this tree immediately became taboo for everyone and was never again eaten by Boieng Island natives.

### Play Activities

Nine of the twelve selected play activities were observed and described by Bell<sup>15</sup> during his ethnological survey of Boieng Island and adjoining Tangan islands. The activities, which in most cases were well described, included crossing the bridge, hide and seek, spear throwing, tops, handball, music, dancing, swinging, and swimming.

#### 1. Crossing the Bridge

This game, known locally as toka pul, was a common favourite

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<sup>15</sup>F. L. S. Bell, "Play Life of the Tanga: Part I," Mankind, II, 3, January 1937, p. 56-61. "Part II," Mankind, II, 4, June 1937, p. 83-86.



of adolescent boys. While a number of participants were needed to play the game it was classified as an individual game as one boy competed against the group and ultimately there was only one winner.<sup>16</sup>

"The players form two lines facing each other, one player grasps the opposite player's wrists in such a way as to form a seat, the whole line thus forming a laneway of human chairs."<sup>17</sup>

The chosen competitor stood on the first pair of wrists and attempted to run along the laneway. Boys forming the laneway added to the difficulty of the task by moving their arms in a variety of ways designed to make the runner fall.

The object of the game was for the runner to complete the course; and, for the group, to make the runner fall. Each boy would take a turn as runner, and the winner was the boy who completed the course, or, failing any completions, he who managed to cover the greatest distance before falling.

Material apparatus was not needed for the game, which could be played on any available open space. Lack of sufficient boys of similar size would have been a limiting factor and it is probable the activity was only common in larger settlements.

The game of crossing the bridge does not appear to have made any major contribution to the maintenance of traditional culture

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<sup>16</sup>Definitions, Chapter I, p. 7.

<sup>17</sup>F. L. S. Bell, "Play Life of Tanga: Part I, " op. cit., p. 57.





on Boieng Island. It may have contributed in a minor way to the provision of leadership necessary for emergency situations. Leaders emerged as the most powerful and skillful men of the tribe and this game, played by adolescent boys, required extreme skill, daring, and strength. Consequently, the successful boys would have these attributes and would demand and receive respect for their achievements. It is only suggested that this respect carried on into adulthood. Leadership, however, certainly did not depend entirely on an individual's performance in the boyhood game of crossing the bridge.

## 2. Hide and Seek

Hide and seek was "one of the most popular games among the smaller children."<sup>18</sup> Boys and girls played this game together and the number of players varied according to the number of suitable participants available.

Bell described the particular form of hide and seek played by Tangan children as follows:

The player who is the seeker lies prone on the ground whilst one of the others sits astride his back. This latter player then sings the following rhyme, at the same time slapping the back of the recumbent player:

He bites you, he bites you,  
Yes, he is eating your back  
This insect which smells.  
But don't get up. Tell me:  
Who is biting you now?

The recumbent player then speaks the name of one of the players,

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid.



and on being named this person scurries off into the bush and hides himself. This goes on until only the player who is astride the seeker is left. When his name is called he too seeks a hiding place, and so the hunt begins. In order to make it easier for the seeker, some of the hiders imitate the calls of birds.<sup>19</sup>

The object of the game was for the seeker to find all the hiders, and while the hiders made the task difficult they must have wanted to be found as they assisted the seeker by making bird-calls (there may have been a rule to this effect). Bell does not describe any chase, or return to base, so it may be assumed that discovery was sufficient to eliminate a hider from the game.

With the exception of a place to play, which may or may not have been defined, no material apparatus was needed. Hide and seek lends itself to any location and the jungles of Boieng Island provided many excellent hiding places.

Hide and seek contributed to the maintenance of traditional Tangan culture in a number of ways. The most significant contribution was to the enculturation of the new members of the society into fully contributing members. For example, hunting was an important economic activity in traditional Tangan societies and the success of the hunter depended on his ability to recognize bird-calls and locate their source.<sup>20</sup> Also, surprise attack was the principal form of warfare on

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>The importance of birds' feathers for personal decoration can be noted on Page 54 of this study.



Boieng Island and the ability to conceal one's self was essential for the attacker (if he was to surprise his victims), and for the attacked if they hoped to survive these raids. Hide and seek, therefore, provided practice in the art of quick self-concealment in natural surroundings.

The simple song and ritual which accompanied the game may have merely been a way of giving the hidiers a chance to conceal themselves. However, it may have contributed to the traditional practice of surrounding special events (such as hunting) with an appropriate traditional ritual.

The song which accompanied the game may have had some symbolic connotation which assisted in the maintenance of a traditional world-view, but Bell does not elaborate sufficiently to enable definite conclusions to be drawn.

### 3. Spear Throwing

The children of Boieng Island would have undoubtedly participated in free-play and game activities involving the use of spears. However, the activities described in detail by Bell<sup>21</sup> were team games played by men and known locally as an sodan, pes man, and pul um komo.

Bell described an sodan as follows:

Two teams of ten men on each side pit their skill with the spear against each other. Two bamboo stakes ("an sil") about seven feet high and no more than one and a half inches in diameter, are

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<sup>21</sup>F. L. S. Bell, "Play Life of the Tanga: Part II, " op. cit., p. 83.







erected about six yards apart on the dancing square. Each team stands behind its stake, and each member of the team is provided with a small hardwood spear. The object of the game is to hurl this spear through the opposing team's "an sil". When each man in one team has finished throwing his spear at the opposing target, the whole team moves away from its own "an sil" so that the other team can treat it likewise. At the end of the first round, that is when both teams have finished throwing the twenty spears allowed them, a tally is made of the number of spears in each "an sil". If team B succeeds in piercing the "an sil" six times, whereas team A pierced it only four times, then these four spears are withdrawn from the "an sil" and team A starts again from scratch. The same rule applies when team A records a greater number of hits than team B. At length, one team pierces the "an sil" with all the darts in its possession. It is then spoken of an "an kum", i.e. the one on top, and members of it deride members of the other team, calling out that they have beaten them. The next proceeding is to give the losing team a chance to even scores. This second division of the game is called kem sam koko.<sup>22</sup>

Pes man was similar to an sodan but in this game the teams usually adopted a name such as eagles or hawks before commencing. Only a single target (an an sil similar to the targets used in an sodan) was used in pes man and both teams fired alternately at this target. When a player of one team lodged his spear in the an sil the following player (from the opposing team) tried either to lodge his spear in the target, or knock his opponent's spear out of the target. The game was completed when one team had all its spears lodged in the an sil at the same time.

The third spear game known as pul um komo was described as follows:

Members of the teams form a long line, shoulder to shoulder. They

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid.



then spread out, leaving a space of four feet between each player. A disc about one and a half inches thick and six inches in diameter is cut from the base of a banana plant. This disc is bowled along from one end of the line to the other, and while it is trundling past each player, he attempts to transfix it with a spear. When all the players of one team have succeeded in piercing the rolling disc, they are judged the winners.<sup>23</sup>

Because spears were the principal weapons used by the natives of Boieng Island any game which involved skilled handling of them contributed directly to the maintenance of the traditional culture. The children's free play activities prepared them for their place in society as protectors and raiders capable of bringing prestige and wealth to their villages. Being team games, the above activities also provided practice in co-operation--presumably, a characteristic essential for success in warfare.

The games described above as played by men involved a high degree of skill and this skill was necessary for survival in the hostile environment which surrounded the Tangas. An sodan and pes man also contributed to the maintenance of the world-view of the Boieng islanders. Winning was most important and losing a disgrace; winners showed no mercy for the defeated and took full advantage of the situation by subjecting their unfortunate foes to insults and humiliation.

#### 4. Tops

Bell did not describe top spinning in detail and from his passing reference that "some of the smaller boys ask their grandfather

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 84.





to fashion them a spinning top ('an gus gus ku') from a hemispherical coconut shell, "<sup>24</sup> little may be deduced concerning this play activity.

Younger children apparently enjoyed top-spinning and the material apparatus was simple. Presumably a flat surfact was used for spinning and children would have used any suitable space available.

The contribution of top-spinning to the maintenance of traditional culture does not appear to have been significant. Read was of the opinion that the stone spinning tops of the Torres Straits were used "simply as toys, much as in our own country . . . and were neither a means of gambling, nor were they used in any special manner."<sup>25</sup> This was probably also true of Boieng Island.

##### 5. Handball

Pul um bo (pig's bladder) was one of the few ball games observed by Bell in Melanesia.<sup>26</sup>

The game was played by two teams of approximately equal numbers, made up of the younger men and youths of the tribe. The object of the game was for each member of the team, taking his predetermined turn, to keep the ball in the air as long as possible by striking it with his hands. The player striking the ball had to record a minimum of ten.

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<sup>24</sup>F. L. S. Bell, "The Play Life of the Tanga: Part I, " op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>25</sup>C. H. Read, "Stone Spinning Tops from Torres Straits, New Guinea, " Journal of the Anthropological Institute, XVII, 1888, p. 86.

<sup>26</sup>F. L. S. Bell, "The Play Life of the Tanga: Part II, " op. cit., p. 83-84.





consecutive hits in order to score a point, and, if unsuccessful, possession of the ball was lost to the opposing team. When a player was attempting to score his team-mates clustered around him to give protection against the opposition, who were permitted to do all in their power to make him miss.

As the name implies, the ball used for pul um bo was the inflated bladder of a freshly killed pig. It was, therefore, quite greasy and difficult to handle. The game would have required a reasonably open space and the beaches or village ceremonial squares undoubtedly provided suitable playing areas.

Bell described the game as "a moist (most) boisterous one, and a most efficient exhaust valve of those animal spirits which animate most native players."<sup>27</sup>

The form of handball described above contributed significantly to the enculturation of Boieng Island natives. Team work was important not only for daily living but also for success in their much practiced art of warfare. Aggressiveness was a greatly admired personality trait and the game promoted this characteristic. Losing a game of Tangan handball was a disgrace and players were encouraged to use any means possible to avoid defeat. Winners were never gracious, and were never congratulated by the defeated;<sup>28</sup> this personality trait

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.



was common to all self-respecting Boieng islanders.

## 6. Music

Music was a popular pastime for the natives of Boieng Island and was enjoyed by all members of the society. The most popular instruments were pan-pipes and lizard-skin drums. Whistles, flutes, and clappers were favourites with the children who used them primarily as noise-making devices. Singing was extremely popular and the natives sang a variety of songs on all festive occasions. Children invariably had simple songs as part of their everyday play activities<sup>29</sup> and adults who introduced new songs to their villages were afforded much acclaim by their fellows.<sup>30</sup>

Like the children of Wogeo, Tangan children were permitted to assist in the musical accompaniment of sacred rites and many of their recreational musical pastimes were imitations of these rites.

The contribution of music to the maintenance of traditional Tangan culture was significant. Music was an important aspect of the Boieng islanders' symbolic world-view and the chants passed on from generation to generation were important in maintaining the traditional legends and myths of the people. These myths were, therefore, being learned by the children from their earliest years and by the time of their initiation they were fully aware of their tribal traditions and

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<sup>29</sup>F. L. S. Bell, "The Play Life of the Tanga: Part I," op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>30</sup>See Page 52.





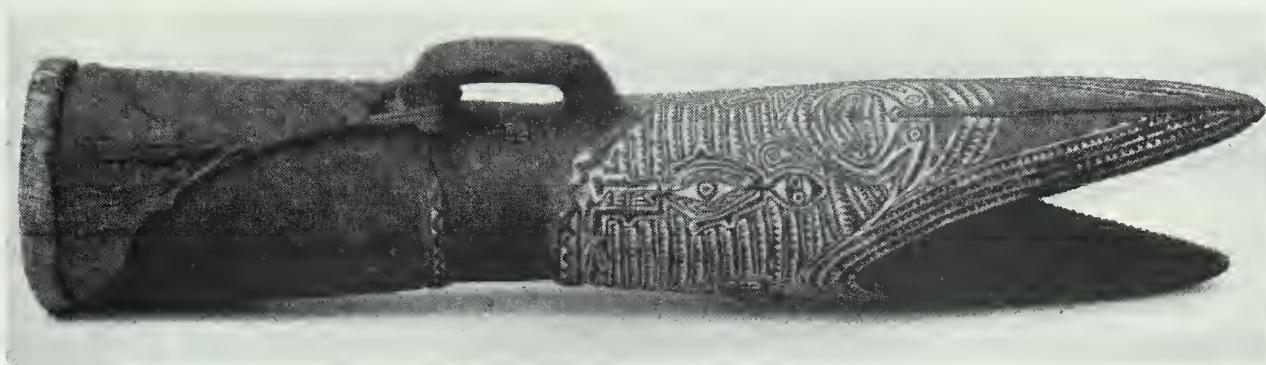


Figure 6. An open-ended lizard-skin drum found in the Papuan Gulf and similar to those used in Tanga (Cranstone, 1961).

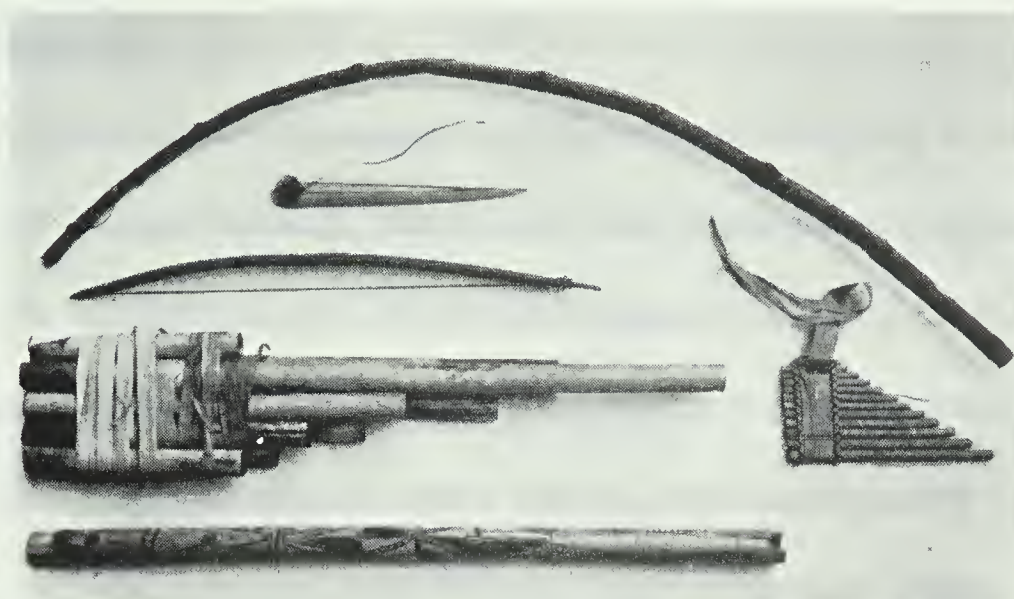


Figure 7. A collection of widely distributed Melanesian instruments including (from the top) a reed flute, jew's harp, musical bow, pan-pipes and bamboo flute (Cranstone, 1961, Plate 10).

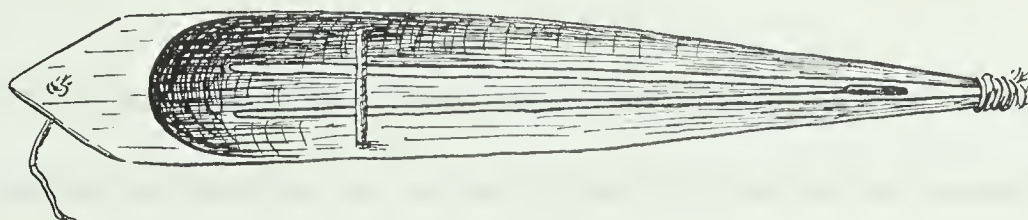


Figure 8. Jew's harp from the Trans-Fly (Williams, 1931).

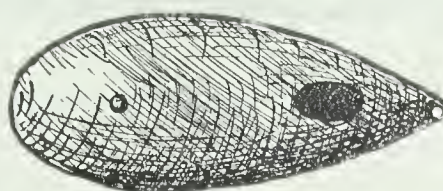


Figure 9. Coco-nut whistle from the Trans-Fly (Williams, 1931).

NOTE: The above instruments appeared similar to those described for Tanga.





heritage.

The role of musical instruments has already been described in Tanga culture<sup>31</sup> and by playing with clappers, whistles, and flutes, the children were learning the techniques and rhythms necessary for maintaining the cultural rites which were all important for harmonious living in traditional Tanga.

## 7. Dancing

Organized recreational dancing was principally a pastime for the adults of Boieng Island. Children often joined their parents on these festive occasions and either participated directly in the dances, or imitated the rhythmic gesticulations and movements from close by.

Recreational dances were rarely spontaneous and took place only after careful preparation and feasting to mark a joyous occasion. The dance was not taken lightly, and participants took great care with personal decoration and adornment the afternoon before such a social gathering.

Children, much of whose play "was imitative of adult activities,"<sup>32</sup> played at dancing for several days following a formal adult dance. They practised body decoration and body adornment with great care and spent considerable time perfecting the dance steps they had

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>F. L. S. Bell, "The Play Life of the Tanga: Part I," op. cit., p. 57.



observed during the festivities.

The role of dance in the recreation of the Boieng people was very similar to the role of music: the one usually accompanied the other and both were reserved for serious rituals as well as for amusement. Consequently, recreational dance contributed to the maintenance of traditional Tangan culture in much the same way as recreational music. Children, from the time they were old enough to participate, started learning how to move to the native musical rhythms and the intricate body movements needed to perform traditional dances important in fulfilling the spiritual requirements of the society.

Since most ritual dances conveyed a definite story, they helped to transmit the legends and myths of the culture.

Adults did not perform these sacred dances on festive occasions but the children were not prevented from copying them during their periods of play. However, once initiated into the tribe, the young person was taught the full significances of ritual dances (if they did not already know them) and then such activities became forbidden.

#### 8. Swimming

Although the climate and geographical location of Boieng Island were ideally suited for salt-water bathing "all children are not keen on swimming, and most of them have to be carefully coached in the art of swimming."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 56.



For those who enjoyed recreational swimming, the coral reef which surrounded the island provided an excellent and interesting place to swim. Bell does not treat the activity in great detail and it can only be assumed that swimming was a pastime enjoyed by a portion of the population depending on their love of water, rather than on age or sex.

Bell described the swimming strokes as follows:

. . . the first stroke which they learn is called 'kukum/pul' i.e. the paddle of the dog, and is an exact imitation of our own dog paddle. Later on they learn a somewhat modified overarm stroke. The breast stroke is used only by swimmers who wish to swim to the bottom of a deep hole.<sup>34</sup>

Swimming was an important skill for the men of Boieng Island because their principal way of travel for trade was by canoe. However, recreational swimming does not appear to have fulfilled the need for swimming skills as most children had to be carefully coached in the art.<sup>35</sup>

#### 9. Swinging

Swinging was only mentioned as a passing observation by Bell when he noted: "A couple of girls make for an overhanging pandanus branch from which a vine is suspended. They hitch a short length of bamboo to the hanging vine and are soon swinging to their heart's

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.





content."<sup>36</sup>

Although Reisenfeld's article, "The swing in Melanesia and some other regions,"<sup>37</sup> was published after Bell's work in Tanga, Reisenfeld does not mention swinging in Tanga or New Ireland and consequently little can be added to the above description.

However, from the included cultural background of the Tangans of Boieng Island, it does not appear that swinging made any significant contribution to the maintenance of traditional culture.

Two of the nine play activities described above--top-spinning and swinging--did not contribute to the maintenance of traditional Tangan culture except by satisfying the basic biological and psychological needs of the participants. Of the remaining seven activities, crossing the bridge and swimming contributed only in a minor way to the provision of leadership and enculturation of new members of the society, respectively.

Hide and seek, spear throwing, and handball appear to have made significant contributions to the enculturation of new carriers of the culture, and the team games of spear throwing and handball also played important socializing roles.

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>A. Reisenfeld, "The Swing in Melanesia and Some Other Regions," Anthropos, XLI-XLIV, 1946-49, p. 737-756.



Recreational music and dance also assisted in the enculturation of the newer members of society by specifically contributing to the maintenance of the traditional common world-view of the Tangans of Boieng Island.

It appears, therefore, that the major role of play activities on Boieng Island was to prepare the children for their adult responsibilities. Where activities were not completely adequate in providing the necessary skills, attitudes, or knowledge necessary for the maintenance of the traditional culture, extra instruction was provided by the adult members of the society (e.g., swimming, and spiritual education of emerging males).



## CHAPTER IV

### GOODENOUGH ISLAND

#### General Situation

Goodenough Island is situated in the Northern D'Entrecasteaux group of islands, which lie in the Moresby Straits, south-east of New Guinea (See Map, Figure 1).

The material presented in this chapter was taken from the ethnographical reports of D. Jenness and Reverend A. Ballantyne.<sup>1</sup> Jenness was a trained anthropologist who spent approximately one year (1911-1912) with his sister, and brother-in-law, Reverend A. Ballantyne, at a mission station in Mud Bay, Goodenough Island.

The Northern D'Entrecasteaux Islands are volcanic mountainous outcrops of an archipelago. Goodenough Island is only twenty five miles in diameter but has a rugged topography. The small crater-lake on the island, the hot springs, and the sulphur deposits at Seymour Bay provide ample evidence of recent volcanic activity. Rich soils, combined with a tropical climate of abundant rain (particularly from September to March), and long warm days throughout the year, result in the island being covered with dense forests, long grasses, and, for most of the year, with large quantities of natural foods such

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<sup>1</sup>D. Jenness and Rev. A. Ballantyne, The Northern D'Entrecasteaux. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1920.





as fruits, nuts, and berries. Bamboo and pandanus also grow naturally and both were important to the economy of the natives; bamboo was used for many household utensils, and pandanus fibre was important for making string which was needed for fishing and trapping nets, net carrying bags, fishing lines, etc. Sago trees grew wild in the swamps around the lake and they were useful for supplementing the natives' diet, particularly during periods of drought.

The people lived in villages of up to forty dwellings which were located close to the beach, and on the hillsides up to a height of approximately four thousand feet. The majority of villages were situated between two hundred and four hundred feet above sea-level, and Jenness and Ballantyne stated that nobody lived more than four thousand feet above sea level.<sup>2</sup> The villages were made up of temporary buildings which formed a rough circle or rectangle around a central village-square.

The natives who inhabited the island were short, thick-set, and had a chocolate colored skin which appeared to darken with age. Jenness and Ballantyne were not able to distinguish any marked physical, or cultural differences, between the inland and coastal dwellers of Goodenough Island.

### Ecological Situation

A limited amount of economic integration existed between the

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



inland and coastal dwellers of the island, as the coastal dwellers frequently traded their fish and sea-foods for vegetables, bamboo and pandanus fibres produced by their inland neighbours. However, the island, when considered as a single economic unit, was basically self-supporting; there was very little trade with neighbouring islands as the people of Goodenough had very little to offer in the way of tradable goods.<sup>3</sup>

Unlike the people of the societies described in Chapters II and III, the natives of Goodenough Island were not organized formally by a chief for major work-tasks such as building houses or large canoes. Each man was expected to be capable of doing these things for himself, but it was not unusual for his friends and relations to assist in such major undertakings.

Professional services were supplied by singers of garden-magic. These singers performed their chants when yams (and occasionally other crops) were planted, and again when the yam-runners started to spread, and finally, just before the harvest. Special healing magicians were also employed in cases of emergency, but their services were not nearly as widely sought after as the garden-magicians. The practitioners of specialized magic were paid with gifts of food or decorated artifacts. These payments were rarely sufficient to maintain a household, and consequently specialist magicians were

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 35-36.



compelled to garden, fish and hunt to provide sustenance for themselves and their dependants.

The principal task of all adult natives of the island was the providing of food and household gardens were the main source of this commodity. The gardens were usually located on the flatter land below the villages and, less frequently, on the hillsides; people living high up the mountains occasionally terraced their garden-plots. Due to the number of kangaroos and pigs which roamed the island, all gardens were carefully fenced with bamboo and small logs. Yams, taro and bananas were the staple foods of Goodenough natives and these crops occupied the major portion of cultivated lands; sugar-cane was also grown but not to the same extent as the above. Similar to people of other Melanesian societies, the natives of Goodenough practised shifting agriculture, and the same plots were rarely planted more than twice.

Gathering, hunting, and fishing pursuits provided essential supplements to the natives' diet. Women and their older children were responsible for gathering, in the inland areas, such things as paw-paws, pumpkins, coconuts, berries, and leaves (used for flavouring); shellfish were gathered from the coastal rock-pools and beaches.

The youths and men were somewhat indifferent hunters<sup>4</sup> but nevertheless hunted kangaroos, wild pigs, squirrels, snakes, lizards,

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.







and birds to provide meat for the occasional meal or feast. Pigs and kangaroos were most commonly captured with a net, and killed with short wooden thrusting-spears. Jenness and Ballantyne reported seeing occasional pits with sharpened stakes imbedded in the floor, which were used for trapping larger animals.<sup>5</sup> Smaller game was killed with slings, or trapped in nets and clubbed to death. The authors do not mention the use of bows and arrows as either hunting devices, or weapons.

Coastal dwelling natives used square nets and long, thin spears (occasionally dipped in poison made from "tuva" roots), to take many varieties of tropical fish, sharks and dugong, from the excellent fishing grounds. These fish were not only eaten by the fishermen and their families, but also served as excellent articles of trade for vegetables, bamboo and pandanus, produced by the people living inland.

The main domestic animals kept on Goodenough Island were pigs and dogs. The latter were extremely neglected and forced to fend for themselves. Pigs, however, received quite as much care as the children. Jenness and Ballantyne noted that:

. . . often a man will carry his pig down to the sea and give it a bath; and both men and women continually nurse them on their laps. Food is cooked for the pig as regularly as for the family, but the dog is never fed and is always lean, hideous, and hungry.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.



Pigs received lavish care because they served as wealth symbols for their owners. The feeling for these animals could not have been deep, as the Goodenough natives were fond of feasting, and no feast was complete without the roasted pork of a recently slain pig.

A wide range of artifacts was produced by the native men. Commonly used household utensils included shell knives and spoons, wooden bowls, coconut-shell cups, bamboo water containers, bone skewers, cane baskets, and clay pots. The clay pots were made only by the women. The clay was kneaded with water and "rolled on a flat board into short strips like miniature sausages."<sup>7</sup> These "miniature sausages" were then coiled into the desired shapes. The Goodenough potters did not use any form of potter's wheel.

The most common tool employed by the native workers was the garden digging stick. They also used a type of plumb-bob made from pandanus string and a pig's jaw; stone hatchets and adzes; shells or glowing sticks for drilling holes; and poles were used for levering heavy objects into desired positions.

The weapons, carefully constructed by the warriors, were throwing and thrusting spears, heavy war-clubs, axes and slings. These articles of war were well suited to the native battles, which were always fought on land, and never from canoes.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 83.



Battles were rarely fought between neighbouring groups on the island but frequent raids were made on adjoining islands. Therefore, war canoes were carefully constructed and decorated with the traditional symbols which ensured safety and success. Smaller single outrigger canoes were used extensively for fishing expeditions to the surrounding reefs, and for social and commercial visits to neighbouring coastal villages. The natives preferred poling to paddling these domestic craft but did not hesitate to use a simple sail made from coconut leaf matting when the conditions were favourable.

There were very few permanent tracks on the island and the routes between settlements were constantly changed. When a path was no longer used, branches were laid across it so the unwary would not become lost.

### Social Organization

Social organization on Goodenough Island was based on the nuclear family which consisted of the man, his wife, and their children. There were no matrilineal associations and the system of kinship was purely patrilineal. The patrilineal association was extended by the belief that a child's parents included all the brothers and sisters of his biological mother and father.

Family groups were liberally controlled by a headman (known as a kauvea) who gained recognition and respect because of his superior magical powers and spiritual manipulations. Because it was







traditional for fathers to pass their magical secrets to their sons, the position of headman was usually inherited.

The headman was not responsible for maintaining law and social control within his family group. However, his believed power over the spirits served as a deterrent to would-be rebels, and taboos were used extensively to prevent thieves from stealing unprotected articles of value. Rival parties settled their differences independently and fines of compensatory gifts were usually paid by wrong-doers to the injured parties. The fines were severe and the defaulters' kinsfolk were expected to assist in meeting the required payments. If the defaulter refused to pay an acceptable fine for his crime, the injured parties, with full justification resorted to "club-law" and clubbed him to death at the first available opportunity. The kin of the criminal had no justifiable means of reprisal, but, to ensure harmony, the administrators of the "club-law" usually provided a compensatory feast for the victim's kinsfolk.

All the land on Goodenough was claimed regardless of its value. Usually the land was owned by a family group and the individuals of that group were free to make sub-claims at will. Fishing grounds close to the shore and in streams were recognized as the property of the nearest residing family group. The reefs which surrounded the island were also claimed as private property. The people guarded their property rights jealously and anyone found trespassing, or conducting economic activities in areas where he had no right being, was



subjected to heavy fines. Artifacts, unless traded, were considered the personal property of their makers and were passed on, at death, in a strict traditional manner. While the individual families of a family group claimed specific pieces of land for their gardens, all naturally occurring things such as wild fruits, undomesticated animals, birds, fish, etc., remained the property of the entire group, and could be exploited by all the members of that group.

### World-View

No event of significance was attributed to chance on Goodenough Island. The people believed that spirits controlled every facet of life, and believed firmly in the powers of magic and spirit manipulations. Consequently, all major undertakings, and most minor events as well, were accompanied, or preceded by, traditional magical rites designed to keep the spirits happy.

The natives distinguished clearly between black and white magic. Black magic, or sorcery, was considered evil, as it involved manipulating the spirits to effect somebody else adversely; white magic, on the other hand, was intended to benefit the practitioner, or the people on whose behalf it was performed. Any unexplained misfortune, such as a sudden illness, was believed to be the result of sorcery, and could, therefore, only be corrected by extremely powerful white magic..

Magic played a significant role in bringing wrong-doers to justice. If a garden were robbed, the owner of the garden sometimes



employed a professional magician to find the thieves. Usually, the magician went through a serious preparatory period which may have lasted for several days; he then went to sleep and, while sleeping, his spirit was supposed to wander around the settlement seeking out the thieves. When he awoke, he named the guilty, and, once named, it was "quite idle for the man to deny his guilt."<sup>9</sup> Another method of seeking out a guilty party was described by Jenness and Ballantyne as follows:

He (the injured party) would take one of the large white cyproea shells with which the canoes are ornamented, and holding it on its edge inside a bowl would call over the names of all the inhabitants of a suspected hamlet. Again and again the shell would fall, but at the thief's name it remained upright. The result was made known to his friends, who would take their spears and go off to find the culprit. No denial was accepted; fighting began at once unless compensation was immediately forthcoming.<sup>10</sup>

Magical beliefs were important in determining the day to day activities of all members of the society, and many customs and taboos were observed. For example, unwed girls and youths were not supposed to eat fish or kangaroo meat; food was not eaten by anybody after the sunset preceding an organized war, until the battle was completed; the food grown by somebody who had recently died was not eaten, but destroyed along with all the plants which remained in the dead person's garden.

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 77-78.







Totemism was also practised, and the totem-symbol of a group could not be killed or eaten. Unlike the Tangans, the people of Goodenough adhered strictly to this rule of totemism. The totem symbol was inherited from one's father, and, therefore, any particular village may have had several different totems.

Sea-water was believed to be the great cleansing agent for all sins, inflicted spells, or illnesses. One bathing was rarely considered sufficient for cure, and, depending on the seriousness of the infliction, a number of bathings had to be taken at specified times of the day over a period of time (e.g., at sunrise and sunset for twenty consecutive days). This belief was common to all the people of Goodenough, and mountain or inland dwellers either walked daily to the beach for cleansing salt-water baths, or moved to the coast for the period believed necessary for cure.

The spirits which controlled the supernatural were believed to be those of the deceased members of the society. These spirits left the body at death and supposedly travelled to a nearby island, uninhabited by mortals, where they were ruled by an extremely powerful spirit-chief. The spirit world was considered to be a land of plenty with continual feasting and dancing.

Symbolism existed in a variety of forms on Goodenough Island. In addition to totemism, the natives had a series of myths which were handed down from generation to generation. These myths, usually associated with natural phenomena such as an odd-shaped rock, or an



old rotten tree, were related to particularly powerful spirits. The objects were usually feared, and the natives were careful not to touch them, or to go too close to them; it was believed that such familiarity would anger the spirits, and drastic misfortune would follow. The myths and legends were popular, and the older members of the society spent a great deal of time relating them to the young members of the tribe. Myths and legends were also transferred by means of dances and songs, which were also popular pastimes of native Goodenough islanders.

Jenness and Ballantyne reported dance as being the "favourite amusement"<sup>11</sup> on Goodenough Island, and almost every dance portrayed some legend or served some spiritual purpose. Some dances performed during their stay in Mud Bay were apparently performed for recreation, as their special meaning had been lost.<sup>12</sup>

Music was an important aspect of the traditional Tangan culture, as musical accompaniment was an essential part of dancing. However, musical instruments were limited to lizard-skin drums and clappers for dancing, and a form of jew's harp played by the young men when they were courting. Singing was very popular and "the most trifling incident may be converted into a song."<sup>13</sup> Songs were, therefore,

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 166.



an important means of transferring legends from one generation to another, and of recording the day-to-day events which occurred within the society.

The Tangan people of Goodenough Island were interested in art, and most artifacts were carefully decorated with elaborate carvings and paintings. Bows of canoes, paddles, and spears were elaborately carved; pots were decorated with shells; and woven coconut mats were painted. Jenness and Ballantyne also noted several examples of rock-paintings and these, together with most art forms, were traditional representations of the spirits which were believed to have controlled the destinies of the natives.<sup>14</sup>

### Individual Social Life

The natives of Goodenough Island were aggressive people and quite prone to fighting. Although fines and physical reprisals imposed on criminals were heavy, the crime-rate on the island was high. Family groups worked together and were jealous of their properties, their rights, and their status within the society. Fines rarely affected only the individual, as his entire family group was expected to assist in their payment; if the payment was not made in full, then the family group was shamed.

Cannibalism was widely practised and victims of war-raids

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 196-200.







were taken back to the victors' village where they were ceremoniously cooked and eaten. Everybody, down to the smallest child, took part in the cannibalistic feast which was considered a revenge rite. No part of the victim was spared, and prisoners taken alive were subjected to extremely cruel torture before they were finally killed, cooked, and eaten. Unlike the Tangans, the Goodenough warriors did not keep the victims' skulls as trophies; following the feast, the skulls, together with any other remains, were "thrown into the sea or woods, whichever was most convenient."<sup>15</sup>

The natives were also arrogant, holding that strength demanded respect. They took pleasure in demonstrating physical prowess, and the more they could humiliate neighbouring family-groups the greater was their pleasure. Whenever a new canoe was completed, the builders paddled or poled it to all the coastal settlements around the island. This was a demonstration of their talents, and at each port they expected, and received, gifts of congratulations.

Unlike many Melanesian people, the natives of Goodenough were extremely clean and took daily baths, often using coconut-oil as soap. The reason for cleanliness, particularly amongst coastal dwellers, may be explained by their belief that sea-water was a universal cleansing and healing agent.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>16</sup>Refer to Page 82.



Clothing for daily wear was of very little importance and the children were invariably nude. Adults only occasionally wore any covering at all. However, a great deal of care was taken with dress and personal adornment for festive and ritual feasts. Both men and women wore brightly decorated grass skirts or lap-laps, shell ornaments, woven armbands, and heavy necklaces. They painted their bodies in bright red and orange designs, and most adults were extensively tattooed.

The houses were not of a relatively high standard, and were described by Jenness and Ballantyne as follows: "With rare exception they all answer to the formula, a triangular prism raised upon piles."<sup>17</sup> The house was often decorated with carvings and painted designs, and the house-owner who had travelled and was able to decorate his house with a design borrowed from another society was greatly admired, and envied, by his fellow villagers. A house was not occupied once a death had occurred within its walls. The natives were afraid the dead person's spirit would return, and, to avoid angering the spirit, survivors immediately deserted their former dwelling and built another close by.

There was very little formal education or training, and children learned traditional skills and techniques by observing and imitating their elders. Children were not required to work before they were approximately twelve years old, but the girls and boys attached

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<sup>17</sup>D. Jenness and Rev. A. Ballantyne, op. cit., p. 46.



themselves to their mothers and fathers, respectively, at a very early age. During this childhood period they learned a great deal by playing. Life changed for the children once they reached puberty as, from this point on, they were expected to assume an ever-increasing number of adult responsibilities. When boys reached puberty they were taken on a walk-about by their fathers and instructed in the spiritual and biological facts of Goodenough adult life. While the men were away from the village on such a mission, girls, of a suitable age, received similar instruction from the women of the family group. After the instruction was completed a feast was held, and, from then on, the newly admitted adults left their parent's homes and slept in special, separate, sleeping huts.

The next major tasks of the young male were to acquire wealth, status, and a bride. Once he had selected a desirable marriage partner, he embarked upon a lengthy courting ritual which included many hours or serenading his choice with a jew's-harp and traditional love chants. When the girl decided to accept his proposals she went to the house of her intended father-in-law, and a series of feasts and sea-baths followed for approximately three days. At the conclusion of these rituals the young couple moved into their own house, and the groom's father provided them with some artifacts and food for approximately two months; thereafter, they were expected to be self-supporting. There was no elaborate payment of a bride-price to the kin of the bride, but the groom and his kin were expected to prepare a garden for the







bride's parents in the following planting season.<sup>18</sup>

The old people were revered and cared for with tenderness "that would shame many a more civilized people."<sup>19</sup> Death was believed to have been caused by the permanent departure of a person's spirit --no distinction was made between death and unconsciousness, and the latter was explained by the departure, and return, of the spirit--and was always followed by organized mourning, which lasted for several weeks. The funeral was a highly organized ritual. The body was laid out on a sloping platform while a narrow grave carefully lined with coconut leaves was prepared. After a great deal of chanting, crying, and wailing by the mourners, the body was placed on its side, with knees tucked, in the grave. A little food was buried with the deceased, and mats or boards were laid over the body to protect it from the earth; a hut was sometimes built over the grave to protect it from the weather. After the funeral, the mourners, including their children, purified themselves with a salt-water bath, and a special ritual which involved rubbing their joints--to prevent them becoming stiff and crooked--with specially prepared banana leaves.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 101-102.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.



## Play Activities

During their ethnographical survey of Goodenough Island, Jenness and Ballantyne observed and reported on seven of the twelve play activities selected for discussion. In addition to these seven activities they also described a number of other games and pastimes of the natives of Goodenough and adjoining islands in the Northern D'Entrecasteaux group. The observed activities included in this study were: crossing the bridge, hide and seek, spear throwing, string figures, music, dancing and finger-games. Because of the geographical location of Goodenough Island, swimming and canoeing were very probably traditional play activities, but as the available sources made no reference to such activities, they could not be included.

### 1. Crossing the Bridge

Vesessedamana (crossing the bridge) was an individual game played by children of both sexes.

A column is formed of pairs of children clasping each other's wrists, just as we do when carrying a successful batsman off the field. A child climbs up and walks along their hands, gripping their hair to steady himself; as fast as he passes one pair they race round and join on at the other end of the column. The child is urged on faster and faster till at last he makes a miscalculation and falls through the midst.<sup>21</sup>

Material apparatus, except for a suitable area, was not needed for the game. Sufficient numbers of similar sized children were needed before the game could be played, and it was probably only played in the larger

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 175.



villages, or when family groups assembled for special occasions.

The activity required a great deal of skill and daring and, therefore, contributed in some measure to the enculturation, as well as socialization, of the potential carriers of the traditional culture.

## 2. Hide and Seek

Hide and seek as it was played on Goodenough Island was a team game. Jenness and Ballantyne described it as follows:

Some of the children lie flat on their stomachs while others place their hands on their backs and chant: . . . , 'crouch down, leaf of the taro, the snakes' shadow, your coconuts beneath them, my coco-nuts beyond them'. Then they run away and hide. Presently the others rise up shouting 'kabokau' and rush off to look for them.<sup>22</sup>

This team game was played by children of both sexes and the object of the game was for the seekers to find the hiders. Once found, the hiders would be eliminated from the game and, if successful in finding all concealed players, the seekers were the winners; if, however, members of the hiding team could not be located, it is likely that they would be declared the winners. The children probably played the game a number of times, and took turns at being the hiders and the seekers.

The only material apparatus needed for this game was a place to play, and, on an island covered with tropical jungles and deserted tracks, selecting a suitable location would not have been a difficult

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 171.





task for the participants.

The most apparent possible function of the game is suggested by the chant which accompanied it. Hunting and gathering were important economic activities on Goodenough Island, and practice in the art of finding play-mates concealed in the natural surroundings of the settlements, developed in the future hunters and collectors, skills which were of great assistance to them in fulfilling their traditional roles in the quest for food.

Like the Tangans, the local natives fought "surprise-attack" battles, and the art of self-concealment in natural surroundings was essential for the success of the attack, and for the survival of the attacked. Hide and seek therefore, also contributed in a minor way, to the maintenance of optimum population levels.

### 3. Spear Throwing

The spear game of babalia played by the boys and youths on Goodenough Island was almost identical to the Tangan game of pul um komo.<sup>23</sup> In the Goodenough version of the game, boys, armed with light wooden spears, formed two parallel lines on a gently sloping, or flat, piece of ground. A wheel made from a banana stalk was bowled between the lines and the contestants attempted to spear this target as it rolled past them. Boys forming the line which scored the greatest number of hits were considered the winners. "Sometimes they use a

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<sup>23</sup>See Chapter III, p. 61-62.



lime instead of a wheel."<sup>24</sup>

Although there is no mention of any other play activities involving spears, the males of Goodenough Island likely had a number of impromptu competitions and pastimes which involved accurate spear-throwing.

The particular game of babalia required a great deal of skill and the skill developed by participation in this game assisted in maintaining the traditional culture. Spears were used extensively for hunting and fishing, and unless the hunters were skilled they could not hope to maintain the production of goods--including food--which were obtained by these economic activities.

The principal weapon on Goodneough was the spear, and, if warriors hoped to survive their frequent battles, or protect their families from attack, they needed to be skilled spear throwers. Therefore, babalia also contributed to some extent to the maintenance of an optimum level of population with the societies of Goodenough Island.

#### 4. String Figures

During his stay on Goodenough Island, Jenness recorded forty eight different string figures, and noted certain contextual characteristics of the pastime.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>D. Jenness and Rev. A. Ballantyne, op. cit., p. 180.

<sup>25</sup>D. Jenness, "Papuan Cat's Cradles," Journal of the Anthropological Institute, L, 1920, p. 299-326.



All the members of the society, from young children to old men, amused themselves, and others, by making string-figures and performing tricks with loops of native string. However, certain figures were reserved for certain groups, and only "married men and old men make the figure 'gi'mo'";<sup>26</sup> married men and women made the fakale'a. If unmarried people were seen making these figures they were ridiculed by the rest of the society.

Apart from the rules of participation, the pastime of string-figures was not governed by any rules and no mention is made of organized competition. The objective of the activity was to practise, and perfect, a number of traditional figures symbolic of everyday objects and actions. No doubt, successful improvisors and creators of acceptable new figures, received acclaim from their contemporaries.

The material apparatus needed for the pastime was simply a piece of string, three to four feet in length, with the ends joined--usually by knotting--to form a loop. String, made from pandanus fibres, was a common artifact on the island, and, therefore, the acquiring of material apparatus for playing string figures must have been a relatively simple task. The pastime did not require any particular site, and was played anywhere a person, or group of people, fancied.

The pastime of making string-figures was not one of physical activity; the principal ingredients were skill and imagination. From

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 301.







the variety of figures described by Jenness, Goodenough islanders must have been both skilful and imaginative.

Making string figures contributed to the maintenance of traditional Goodenough culture by familiarizing children with basic skills needed for weaving the many string artifacts needed for daily life; these included string carrying bags, trapping nets, and fishing nets. Children probably learned the art of string-making through the incentive of making strings for this pastime, and string was not only important for personal use, but was also an extremely tradable commodity: the inland natives traded string for the coastal products of sea-foods and shell artifacts.

The symbolic representations of the various string figures also contributed to the maintenance of the traditional world-view of the natives. Jenness pointed out that certain figures appeared to be connected with magic and gave the example of a string figure which was used to discover the identity of a vegetable thief.

An incantation was first sung, then the figure was made ('walia'va' --the string bag). As the name of each suspected person was pronounced, the right hand was jerked downwards between the loops. If it passed through freely he was innocent, but if it stuck he was guilty.<sup>27</sup>

Another example of the magical role of string figures was the traditional banning of certain figures which were believed harmful to the yam crop. These figures could only be made when the yams had been harvested, and before the new crop was planted.

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid.



## 5. Music

Music was a popular pastime of natives of both sexes, and all ages. In addition to being a pastime in its own right, music was considered an essential part of recreational and religious dance.

Instruments were few in number and consisted principally of the open ended drum, and clappers. There were two types of clappers; one was a "limestick handle split at one end,"<sup>28</sup> and was rarely used; the other was an ordinary native comb which was beaten against a lime gourd. A wooden jew's harp was also popular with the children and young men, and this instrument was not used for dances, but was considered an essential part of courtship. Coastal natives occasionally used a conch-shell to summon their fellows, but this device could only produce one sustained note and was, therefore, not very popular at musical recitals or dances.

"Though their instruments lack variety one can hardly assert the same of their songs."<sup>29</sup> They had religious and spiritual songs for every occasion; they also sang for the sake of singing, and most people sang as they worked. Certain songs were reserved for certain tasks. For example, there was a special song sung by canoe-builders; different songs were sung while working in the gardens; another particular favourite was reserved for singing while walking through the

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<sup>28</sup>D. Jenness and Rev. A. Ballantyne, op. cit., p. 165.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.



jungle. Such songs did not appear to have any spiritual significance, and were sung merely for pleasure.

Many of the children's games and pastimes were accompanied by suitable songs or chants, and Jenness and Ballantyne described a number of children's songs that corresponded to current nursery rhymes.<sup>30</sup>

The role of recreational music in maintaining traditional Goodenough culture was two-fold. Music formed a very important part of the spiritual and religious ritual and the conscious, or unconscious learning of songs, and how to sing them, was essential if the traditions were to be carried on in future generations. The ability to play instruments was equally important, and the habit of playing with the traditional instruments ensured the preparation of future adult musicians necessary for religious and spiritual rituals.

The second role of music in maintaining culture, came from the habit of people to make up songs about everyday events. This practice led to the verbal recording and passing on of the history of the natives. The popularity of such songs also ensured the maintenance of traditional legends which were important for the survival of a traditional world-view.

## 6. Dancing

"The favourite amusement is dancing, and in a season of

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 166-167.





plenty the drums may be heard almost every night."<sup>31</sup> From the descriptions of festive dances, this activity, like music, must have been a favourite of all ages. Certain dances were reserved for men, and others for women but the children were free to imitate and practise all dances.

Dances of an organized nature were always preceded by a feast, and natives spared no effort with their personal decoration. On such occasions there were no restrictions as to style: grass-skirts, brightly coloured feathers, shell and bone ornaments, and large quantities of clay-based body paints, were used liberally.

The dances were complicated and, because of their lengthy duration, required a great deal of stamina. The steps were usually traditional arrangements designed to retell a popular myth or legend of the tribe. Many of the dances had, however, lost their meaning and were adaptations of forgotten rituals.

The contribution of recreational dance to cultural survival was very similar to the contribution of music. Dancing was an important aspect of most rituals, and children imitating the dances of their elders learned the rhythmic movements they would need as fully contributing adults.

The socializing aspect of dance can not be overlooked. Recreational dances, and the accompanying feasts, served to bring adults

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 169.



together. This type of contact was helpful in maintaining harmony (especially in view of the war-like nature of the people), promoting an interchange of ideas, and developing trade relationships between coastal and inland natives.

## 7. Finger Games

Hand, or finger games, were, according to definition, group pastimes on Goodenough Island. The activities described below were played by groups of younger children who sat, or squatted, in a tight circle.

The first such game described by Jenness and Ballantyne was called moliikeke.

The children gather in a circle and fold their first fingers over their thumbs, the middle fingers over the first fingers, the third fingers over the middle fingers, and then the little fingers over the third. Their leader then asks them: . . . , "Your mother where has she gone?" and the children reply: . . . , "My mother, our 'vilaga' (an edible plant) is broken up." The leader again asks: . . . , "Your father, where is your father?" and the children again reply: . . . , "My father he is gone, the 'moliikeke' he is crushing." One and all then cry . . . , "eyes like a pig," and open their hands, at the same time jerking them forward. The fingers thus folded on top of one another are supposed to resemble a pig's eyes.<sup>32</sup>

A second finger pastime called givi dibulina, was described as follows:

. . . the children form a circle and make a pyramid of hands, each pinching the back of the hand below. When the pyramid is complete they chant: . . . "We sleep, the 'kabwa' (a bird) sings, "

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 175.







Figure 10. Children playing Homban, the game of The Ants in the Trans-Fly (Williams, 1931).

NOTE: This is a typical example of a finger-game.





and at the last word all the hands are shaken free.<sup>33</sup>

A third pastime observed in Mud Bay was called tumo denodene (boring) and was similar to the above activity. After a minor ritual involving a build up of hands and a chant--"withered banana leaf unripe, underneath is loosely woven, i.e. on the outside the banana leaf matting of the house is closely plaited, but underneath it is loose,"<sup>34</sup> the participants push each other over.

The pastimes described obviously involve a great deal of symbolism and may, therefore, have contributed in some way to the maintenance of a traditional world-view. However, such a contribution was unlikely significant, for it is difficult to imagine how the absence of such activities would have changed the cultural pattern of the people.

Five of the seven activities described above, then, appear to have made a significant contribution to the maintenance of traditional Goodenough Island culture. Hide and seek and spear throwing were important contributors to the maintenance of the material culture of the people. String figures contributed to the maintenance of the traditional world-view, as well as to the material culture of the people. Music and dance were important play activities for maintaining the world-view of the natives and for preparing future generations for

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.



their adult spiritual life.

Finger games and crossing the bridge, however, do not appear to have made any significant contribution to the maintenance of traditional culture on Goodenough Island.



## CHAPTER V

### MANUS

#### General Situation

The Manus people lived in small settlements located close to the southern shore of Great Admiralty Island (See Map, Figure 1). The settlements were made up of a number of houses constructed on stilts embedded into the mud of the shallow lagoons lying between the Great Admiralty Island coastline and the coral reefs surrounding the island. Manus natives occupied the four principal settlements of Peri, Patusi, Loitcha and Tchalalo. Even though the people of these villages had access to low swampy islands scattered throughout the lagoon, they were essentially "landless rulers of the lagoons and reefs."<sup>1</sup>

Great Admiralty Island lies approximately two degrees south of the equator, and is, therefore, subjected to heavy rains, wild winds, and hot steamy days which do not vary significantly in length throughout the year. This part of the world does not know the conventional seasons of summer, autumn, spring and winter; instead, their year consists of a wet season (January to March approximately), and the rest of the year; that is, from March or April until the following monsoon period.

Because of their environment, Manus natives knew a world of

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<sup>1</sup>M. Mead, Growing Up in New Guinea, New York: Mentor Books, (1930), p. 17.





water and mud, and not the typical Melanesian world of rugged volcanic topography and dense tropical jungles. They used the mainland for occasional garden plots, and for gathering raw materials needed for house-building and artifacts. However, such activities were limited because this land belonged to the Usiai people who jealously guarded their property rights.

The preponderance of material used in this chapter was based upon the ethnographical surveys of Margaret Mead<sup>2</sup> and Reo Fortune.<sup>3</sup> Fortune and Mead formed a husband and wife ethnographic team and based themselves in the Manus village of Peri for six months during 1928-29. Fortune was particularly interested in the spiritual beliefs and practices of the people, and Mead attempted to describe the way in which children were prepared for adult Manus life. In order to examine their respective interests, Fortune and Mead gathered a

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<sup>2</sup>(a)Ibid.

(b)Margaret Mead, "An Investigation of Thought of Primitive Children ---," J. A. I., LXII, 1932, p. 173-190.

(c)Margaret Mead, "Melanesian Middlemen," Natural History, XXX, 1930, p. 115-130.

(d)Margaret Mead, "Kinship in the Admiralty Islands," Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, XXXIV, Part II, 1934.

<sup>3</sup>(a)Reo Fortune, Manus Religion. University of Nebraska Press, Bison Book edition.

(b)Reo Fortune, "Manus Religion," Oceania, II, No. 1, 1931, p. 74-108.



great deal of information concerning the traditional cultural characteristics of the Manus people.

### Ecological Situation

Because of the influence of their immediate environment, Manus natives, unlike most Melanesian people, were not self-supporting; they were forced to rely upon specialization and trade for their subsistence. The people of Peri, and similar Manus villages, could not grow vegetables, and had little access to food which grew wild in tropical jungles. They could not hunt game, for there was none; nor were raw materials, needed for making utensils and tools, available. Consequently, they were specialist fishermen who traded their catches in daily transactions held with the Usiaï and Matankor people, their mainland neighbours.

The Manus natives of Peri controlled trade in the area and were astute business men. Frequently, they traded goods indirectly, either for profit or in order to obtain a particular product from people who caught their own fish. For example, Peri natives may have needed clay pots from Mbuke. However, the Mbuke people were also accomplished fishermen, so the Peri people might trade fish for yams of the Yalowan, and, without unloading them from their canoes, take them to the Mbuke and trade yams for clay pots.

Although trading transactions were conducted through barter, the Manus people did use a form of money made from small flat shells.



Most business transactions were carried out in monetary terms, and the accumulation of wealth was the principal aim of Manus adults. The men stored their money by threading it onto fine cords made from bark. These cords of money were worn on public occasions and "whole aprons of shell money were made, and the edges of armbands and anklets were ornamented with shell money . . . "<sup>4</sup>

The Manus natives were not greatly concerned with producing a large quantity or variety of material goods; they did not have the necessary raw materials, and, being successful traders, they were able to obtain their material wants and needs from their mainland neighbours. The only artifacts produced by the Manus natives were their houses, canoes, bark-cords for storing money, and some of the less refined fishing equipment.

Their finer fish nets, however, are made in Lou and other more distant Matanko settlements. They depend upon the daily markets and the less regular overseas trade for everything else which they use. With the Usiai they trade for sago, yams, taro, taro-leaves, betel nuts, pepper leaves, lime gourds, lime spatulas, paraminium nut used as gumming material, bark for rope and string making, paraminium nut covered baskets, oil strainers, carrying bags, etc. From their own people of Mbuke they get pots. From the people of Yalowan and Lou their Manus neighbours get yams, carved bowls, and other fine wood-work, fish nets, lime gourds, oil containers, spears, and tools of obsidian. From Rambutchon and Nauna they get carved beads, from Pak war charms of carved heads and frigate bird feathers, from all of the islands coconuts and coconut oil.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>M. Mead, Growing Up in New Guinea. op. cit., p. 182.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 173-174.







Within each of the Manus villages there was very little specialization except for the division of labour according to sex. Men were responsible for catching fish, building houses and canoes, and carrying out daily trade transactions. Women had to look after the children, prepare meals, and make any of the minor artifacts (such as bark rope and string) from the imported raw materials. Peri women had the added task of looking after sago in the sago-swamps located on the mainland.<sup>6</sup> The children often assisted the women in collecting shell-fish from the rock pools on the adjoining reefs, and crabs, etc., from the mud flats during low tide.

Certain sorcerers of outstanding ability sometimes provided specialist services in return for money payments. Compared to the societies already covered in the preceding chapters, Manus people were more practical, and did not rely as heavily on magic and sorcery. However, sudden illnesses were usually attributed to black magic, and could only be remedied with more powerful white magic. If the kin of the stricken did not have such powers, they employed somebody who supposedly did.<sup>7</sup>

All adult males were expected to have the necessary skills to build their own houses and canoes. Such projects, however, usually

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<sup>6</sup>The Manus natives of Peri obtained some sago fields from their Usiai neighbours, either through trade or warfare, some time before Mead and Fortune went to the village.

<sup>7</sup>R. Fortune, Manus Religion. op. cit., p. 106-108.



became joint efforts, and the kin, or friends of the man, assisted in larger undertakings of this type.

Fishing and trading were individual enterprises, and each man was expected to fend for himself. These activities were, in fact, highly competitive, as status was determined almost entirely by wealth.

Unlike the people of the societies previously examined, the natives of Manus did not pursue the usual methods of providing themselves with food. There was only a limited amount of agriculture (Peri villagers); there was some incidental collecting of shell fish, no hunting, and very little domestication of animals. However, they did have some pigs obtained through trade which were eaten on festive occasions, but were more commonly used for further trade transactions. Dogs, on the other hand, were sometimes kept for pets, but not for food. The principal methods of satisfying the food quest were trading and fishing.

Manus natives were excellent fishermen. The principal methods employed were netting from canoes, spearing with multi-pronged fishing spears, and using small bows and arrows for shooting fish trapped in pools during low tide. Of these, netting and spearing were the most successful methods and accounted for most of the fish taken. Fishing lines and traps were apparently unknown to Manus fishermen, as neither Fortune, nor Mead, made any reference to such methods being used.



Fish undoubtedly constituted a large part of the Manus diet, but, as indicated by the list of foods obtained in trade with mainlanders, they ate foods similar to those eaten throughout Melanesia. These foods were usually cooked before being eaten, and large stews, heavily spiced with pepper leaves, accompanied by taro and sago cakes, were the most popular meals. Certain foods were also prepared for special rituals or to remedy illnesses. For example, a coconut soup called bulukol was taken by a future bride's kin to the family of her betrothed for five days prior to her wedding;<sup>8</sup> Fortune also observed a number of rituals and food tabus during his stay at Peri.<sup>9</sup>

Traditionally, the males of Manus were very aggressive and prone to fighting. The bases of their wars were of two sources. The most common form of warfare took place between people of the various Manus and nearby settlements with which they had close trading ties; usually such battles developed because of economic differences. The second type of warfare, which also had economic motives, took the form of a raiding party of young warriors which attacked a rival village for the purpose of capturing the young women. These women were taken back to the attackers' village where they were installed as prostitutes. The captor of the girl collected money for her services, and

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<sup>8</sup>M. Mead, Growing Up in New Guinea, op. cit., p. 108.

<sup>9</sup>R. Fortune, Manus Religion, op. cit., p. 73, 74, 256-257, and 198.







it was not unusual for the owner of a prostitute to take his charge on money-making tours.<sup>10</sup>

The principal weapon used by Manus warriors was a light bamboo-shafted throwing spear with an obsidian point. Axes were used for hand-to-hand fighting, but clubs, like bows and arrows, were only occasionally used as weapons. Shields were not used by either the Manus warriors, or their mainland adversaries.

Wars were usually preceded by a special war-dance, but neither Mead nor Fortune emphasized the spiritual significance of these dances. The principal aim of such dances was to rouse the young men's spirits for the ensuing battle, and not to call on special super-natural spirits for protection or assistance. The warriors were superstitious, however, and good luck charms, in the form of carved human heads, were worn into battle.

Manus natives were not cannibals, but the mainland natives were. Being business men, even in warfare, the Manus warriors capitalized on the mainlander's belief in cannibalism by carrying corpses back to their Manus villages. These corpses were then offered for sale to the vanquished's kin, who were only too willing to pay lest their dead relative be subjected to the extreme insult of being eaten by his enemies.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 213.



Large single-outrigger war canoes were used to transport the attackers to the mainland for raids. These canoes were also used when a Manus village, such as Peri, was attacked. If defending Manus warriors had sufficient notice, they paddled out to meet any raiding war-parties as they preferred to fight on the water and by so doing lessen the dangers to which their families might be exposed.

Canoes of various types formed the main source of transportation. Smaller canoes were poled around the villages, and used for daily fishing excursions to the fishing grounds and reefs. All varieties of canoes were used for carrying produce and from all daily markets, but only large single out-riggers, with two lug-sails and a cabin, were used for the less frequent inter-island trading cruises.<sup>12</sup>

Communications were maintained in the usual manner of speech. However, the Manus people also had a crude form of drum-language, and simple messages were frequently sent across the water to neighbours, or absent members of the family.<sup>13</sup>

### Social Organization

The kinship system of the Manus people was loosely organized around paternal clans which consisted of three to ten male adults, their wives, and their children. The children were born into their father's

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<sup>12</sup>M. Mead, op. cit., p. 173.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 35.



clan, but, as adoption was common, could become a member of their mother's clan if adopted by the mother's blood-brother. Such an occurrence was not unusual, particularly if the mother's clan happened to be declining because the children being born into her brother's families happened to be daughters. Girls never lost their original clan allegiances although they were, in a strict sense, considered members of their husbands' clans once they were married.

Perhaps the chief role of clan membership was deciding where individuals should live. It was a long-standing tradition for the members of clans to live close by each other. In a village such as Peri, therefore, each clan occupied a certain part of the settlement, and each clan "sub-settlement" was separated from other similar family groups.

The politics of Manus was not highly organized as each village had a loosely structured democracy which handled local affairs, and was completely independent of all other villages. Wealth was all important for status in Manus society, and the wealthier a man was, the greater his voice in public affairs. However, vital issues were apparently decided democratically, and before any major decisions were made "altogether boy he talk."<sup>14</sup> Age alone was not sufficient to demand respect, but age combined with reasonable financial success did give a man some prestige and a slightly more important role in

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 176.





public decision-making.

Social control was maintained through heavy fines and a tradition of trustworthiness and truthfulness. Any person found guilty of theft, murder, rape, etc., was required to pay a heavy monetary fine of compensation to the injured party, or the injured party's kin. If such a payment was not forthcoming, the convicted criminal was either banished from the settlement, or according to concepts of local justice, justifiably murdered by the victims of his crime. Such instances were apparently rare, as the criminal's clan usually preferred to pay the fine rather than be disgraced by the wrongs of one of their numbers.

The religious concept of Sir Ghost also played a major role in maintaining social order in Manus societies. Sir Ghost was the spirit of a man's dead father, and was the object of the man's, and his family's, religious worship. A Sir Ghost could be obtained by adoption if a man did not have his own father's spirit to call upon. In such cases, the adopted Sir Ghost came from a man who had died without leaving any male descendants. The Sir Ghost was presumed to watch over his charges, and, being extremely powerful, was considered capable of inflicting severe reprisals on any that may have wronged, or harmed them. The fear of these reprisals made potential criminals hesitant to commit crimes.

Sir Ghost was considered the head of the household in which he resided, and was represented by his skull (or a carved wooden replica, if the skull happened to be lost) which hung over the door of



his house. All things, including the house, were the property of the spiritual father and he was consulted regularly on such matters as how money should be spent, where the householders should fish, and what articles should change hands in the daily trade excursions. Sir Ghost was, therefore, responsible for his own material goods, and any mortal stealing these items had to be prepared to face the wrath of an angry spirit.

Although Manus was a relatively democratic society, there were definite class levels based largely upon the wealth of the individuals. The upper class were known as lapans and people belonging to this group had the right to decorate their houses, wear special shell ornaments on festive occasions, and lead raiding parties into battles. They did not have any special rights or responsibilities in maintaining social order in the community. The lower order, made up of the majority of Manus natives, was known as the lau group.<sup>15</sup>

### World-View

As previously mentioned, Manus families worshipped the spirit of a dead father known as Sir Ghost. The powers and functions of these spiritual idols have also been illustrated by the role they played in maintaining social order, and in establishing property concepts. Believing Sir Ghost to be all powerful, the Manus natives expected him

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 176.



to take care of their welfare. Consequently, if continued or severe misfortune befell a native, he could, with full justification, denounce his Sir Ghost. This he did by smashing, or throwing away, the skull which hung inside the doorway of his house. A denounced spirit was then believed to be homeless, and was forced to wander the lagoons and marshes, from village to village, and suffer the desolate existence of an outcast. In such cases, Sir Ghost also lost all his ownership rights of material goods which previously belonged to him, and the irate man set about finding himself another Sir Ghost. Manus natives never honoured a grandfather Sir Ghost, and it was suggested that any Sir Ghost who allowed his charge to die was not worth honouring.<sup>16</sup>

There was not a great deal of ritual associated with spiritual or religious beliefs in Manus societies. The people, while being extremely superstitious, were practical. They believed their own Sir Ghost was obliged to care for them, and assist them in all their daily activities. Members of a household frequently talked to their own Sir Ghost, but as there was no common spirits, there was little call for group rituals. Feasts were held to celebrate successes in war and commerce, but such events were purely celebrations, and not feasts of thanksgiving; the Sir Ghosts of the successful people had merely done what was expected, and could be thanked privately if the individuals thought it necessary.

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<sup>16</sup>R. Fortune, op. cit., p. 1-3.







Due to the superstitious nature of Manus natives, sorcery was practised. Sorcerers trained by travelling from village to village collecting charms and recipes for good-luck potions, which they sold for money. The very successful sorcerer was almost a complete specialist, as he often made sufficient money to buy all the material goods he needed.

Magic was occasionally practised, and Manus people discriminated between white and black magic in the same way as many other Melanesian societies.<sup>17</sup> However, magic was resorted to only in cases of extreme despair, as Sir Ghost was supposed to take care of spiritual reprisals. If, however, he was thought to have failed, and was consequently denounced by his family, his ward resorted to black magic to punish those who had wronged him and his family, or white magic to overcome any unaccountable misfortunes which occurred.

Although the Manus natives appreciated expressions of art forms, these art forms were not identified to any significant extent with worship of great all-powerful spirits. Mead reported that beadwork, and a small amount of unskilled carving, were the only art-forms practised in the village of Peri.<sup>18</sup> However, even the beads were introduced to Manus by European traders and, therefore, this form of

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<sup>17</sup>The difference between white and black magic is described in Chapter IV, p. 80.

<sup>18</sup>M. Mead, op. cit., p. 159-160, and 174.



art could not be classed as traditional.<sup>19</sup> The houses, canoes, weapons and daily utensils were ornately carved and decorated, but the majority of carvings, and certainly all the more intricate ones, were obtained through trade with their more artistic neighbours.

Neither the children nor the adults were particularly fond of singing, and songs (really dull chants) were heard only when the singers appeared bored and seemed to have had nothing better to do.<sup>20</sup> The slit-gong drum was the lone instrument played in Manus settlements--the importance of the slit-gong for communication has already been noted and was played during festive dances and on special occasions such as repayment of a long outstanding debt.

Dances were equally unimaginative and the principal cause for holding a feast and dance was the finalizing of a major commercial undertaking. Feasts and dances were rarely held (probably because of the Manus environment) and any dances which may have been performed had little, or no, religious significance.

Manus people had a tradition of hard work, honesty, and extreme faith: acquisition of wealth was their principal aim in life and "the Manus native was forever intent upon turning five strings of shell money into ten."<sup>21</sup> Adults and children loved to argue as they searched

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 186.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 6.



constantly for the truth; Manus men argued for the sake of argument, and they did such things as "carry a useless fish jaw for months, in the hope of meeting a man with whom they had an argument about the number of teeth in the jaw of that particular species."<sup>22</sup> Faith and belief in traditional ideals were taken for granted, and although the emerging adults had little or no formal education in such matters, the moral code was probably more stringent in Manus than in most other Melanesian societies.<sup>23</sup>

### Individual Social Life

Manus natives were serious people who worked hard, traded competitively, "and they are kept to work and to good morals by authority--in their case not secular, but remarkably efficient none the less."<sup>24</sup> Men were not demonstratively affectionate to their wives, and women were considered relatively unimportant in a world of work and commerce. The children were given complete freedom, and their fathers lavished affection on them from the time they were old enough to walk. The children returned this affection, and both boys and girls became "father orientated" at a very early age. Girls changed their allegiance to their mothers when they started to participate in the daily

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<sup>22</sup>R. Fortune, op. cit., Preface, p. xi.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 344-346.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., Preface, p. xi.







chores of cooking, collecting, and making simple artifacts.

Because the villages were situated over water, the people of Manus were relatively clean and bathed often, although not regularly. Children spent a good deal of their time in the water and were either clean, or covered with mud--depending where they had been, and what they had been doing.

The general everyday clothing for women consisted of grass skirts and arm-bands. Men also wore armbands and covered their genitals with simple shell G-string. Children went naked except for belts and armbands which were occasionally worn for decoration. For special occasions such as marriages or public celebrations, the men and women went to a great deal of trouble with personal adornment. These were the times to bring out the carefully stored strings of shell-money, necklaces, arm and leg bands, and gaily colored grass skirts. The costume was designed to display wealth, and a bride's ornaments of money went with her as a dowry. Occasionally, the young men would dress up in their finest garb and parade (by canoe) through the village to display their finery and in the hope of catching favourable glances from the eligible maidens.

Training and education were not formally organized for Manus children, and they learned the basic skills needed in later life by imitating their elders. Adults were tolerant of most of the children's whims, but took particular care to establish an early respect for property. Through example they were taught prudery and motor



co-ordination essential for their survival, but the world-view qualities of faith, honesty, and spiritual belief in Sir Ghost were taken for granted. Skills necessary for work were also learned incidentally, and children were never forced to work; nor were they deprived of the opportunity to participate in any work activity which might be going on. Adults exhibited great patience with the child who wanted to help, and there was no thought of sending a child away just because he or she happened to lessen adult efficiency in performing their daily tasks.

Neither Mead nor Fortune described the attitudes of the Manus people towards old age, except to point out that an old man who had acquired wealth during his lifetime was respected, and a poor man, of any age, was scorned.

Death was considered the fault of the deceased's Sir Ghost, but was always met with mixed feelings: on the one hand, the survivors were angry with the Sir Ghost for permitting his son to die, and they showed their displeasure by casting the Sir Ghost into the lagoon and tearing down his house; on the other hand, at least the eldest son or adopted ward of the dead man inherited the spirit as a spirit-father to look after his interests.

After death, the body was carefully prepared for a sea-burial, and the ward and mourners placed strings of shell money on the corpse for its last voyage. The skull was removed, preserved by the ward, and placed in his house as a symbol of his newly acquired Sir Ghost. Following the funeral rites the money was recovered from the body as





the Manus people were far too practical to allow hard-earned and all-important money to pass so pointlessly from their possession.

### Play Activities

The play activities of Manus children were not described in detail by Mead, and Fortune did not make any reference to games or pastimes in his publications. Mead recognized the importance of play in Manus society and mentioned play activities on numerous occasions. From her brief descriptions and passing references, the following seven activities have been included: canoeing, spear throwing, tops, string figures, swimming, dancing, and music. An elaboration on these seven activities follows:

#### 1. Canoeing

Canoeing was a favourite pastime of Manus children of all ages. There were two types of canoeing activities: firstly, poling, paddling, and sailing canoes, and secondly, sailing model canoes. Model canoes were popular toys of the older boys who waded about the shallow lagoons sailing them at low tide.

Both boys and girls often had their own canoes which they poled around the Manus villages. In addition to their own canoes, the children were free to play with the larger canoes which belonged to the adults.

All canoes were similarly designed. They were made from hollowed logs and varied from approximately six to twelve feet in





length. A single outrigger was lashed onto the hull to give the craft added stability. As implied earlier, the usual method of propelling canoes around the villages and across the shallow lagoons, was by means of a long pole. The canoeist stood in the back of his craft when he was poling, or punting, from place to place. In deeper water, a simple paddle was used to propel the canoe, and if a favourable wind was present, a mast and sail were quickly erected at the front of the craft.

Although Mead did not make any reference to children racing their model canoes, or conducting races in the larger crafts, it is probable that such contests were held. However, if the children did compete against each other, contests must have resulted from occasional challenges. There were no formal regattas or structured competitions with commonly accepted and transferrable rules.

In a society of water-dwelling people, the contribution of playing canoes to the survival of traditional culture is apparent. Canoes formed the only means of transport, and since the Manus people depended on trade for their existence, transport was essential for survival. Children learned the skills necessary for handling the clumsy native crafts through play at an early age, and they continued to practise these skills throughout their entire lifetime. The principal product of Manus adults was fish, and canoes were used for fishing. The Manus male who could not fish had little to trade, and, if he did not trade, there was no method of accumulating money (needed for status), or of





Figure 11. Sailing a model canoe in Peri (Mead, 1928).



Figure 12. Children in play-canoes in Peri (Mead, 1929).





providing himself and his family with food and artifacts needed for everyday existence.

Men were also expected to be capable of designing and building canoes. Therefore, the pastime of building and sailing model canoes gave boys an opportunity to learn the skills needed for making larger crafts when the occasions arose.

## 2. Spear Throwing

Spear throwing was a popular pastime of male Manus children. Mead does not describe any formal rules, or competitions, but from her brief description of a war game, it appears that one form of the activity was a team game:

The children make small wooden spears, about two and a half feet in length and fasten tips of pith on them. Then pairs of small boys will stand on the little islets, each with a handful of spears, and simultaneously hurl spears at each other. Dodging is as important a skill as throwing, for the Manus used no shields and the avalanche of enemy spears could only be dodged. This is an art which requires early training for proficiency, and boys of ten or twelve are already experts with their light weapons.<sup>25</sup>

A second form of spear play was also practised by the boys of the Manus society. When they were approximately three or four years old, the boys were given small fish-spears, and they often wandered about the shallow pools spearing small fish during low tide. Their catches were not economically significant as children were not required to perform any work at all; life for them was continual

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<sup>25</sup>M. Mead, op. cit., p. 35.





play.<sup>26</sup> From the description provided, it appears that the activity was not competitive, and, therefore, it would be classified for the purpose of this study sometimes as a group-pastime, and sometimes as an individual pastime.

Both of the above spear throwing activities seem to have contributed to the survival of traditional Manus culture. Traditionally, the Manus were aggressive people who frequently initiated wars, and were always prepared to battle for economic justice. Although their preferred form of attack was a surprise raid (where it would seem that hand-to-hand fighting predominated), they defended their own settlements from their canoes. In the latter form of warfare, spears would be effective missiles, and success depended on accuracy and the ability to dodge. Therefore, the first mentioned war-game developed skills necessary for the maintenance of the Manus population.

The second game of spearing fish in the shallow lagoons was important for developing essential fishing skills. In Manus, the maintenance of the material culture depended upon the ability of men to fish successfully. As long as they maintained the necessary fishing skills they could maintain their traditional means of subsistence; that is, they could continue to trade. However, if the skills were lost, Manus people would have surely had to leave their water-bound villages, and their traditional way of life would have changed accordingly.

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<sup>26</sup>See Chapter V, p. 118-119.



### 3. Tops

From the passing references made by Mead<sup>27</sup> to children playing with tops, very little can be said of the activity. Tops were apparently common toys used by the younger children of both sexes. Two types of tops were mentioned; one was made from a small green fruit, and the other from a hard seed. Unfortunately, Mead did not mention the names of the fruit, or the seed, and did not describe how the tops were made.<sup>28</sup>

Since Manus natives were not overly involved in making their own artifacts, and as tops were not mentioned in spiritual or religious rituals, it appears that they did not play a significant role in the maintenance of traditional Manus culture.

### 4. String Figures

Only two passing references were made to children playing

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 19, 75.

<sup>28</sup>A. B. Lewis, in his book People of the South Pacific (Chicago: Chicago Natural History Museum, 1951, p. 164-165), included the following description of tops but did not note the particular locations of his observations.

One common sort is made by pushing a sharp slender stick through a round seed. The upper end projects far enough so that it can be rolled between the palms of the hands, or it may be twirled with the thumb and the finger. Sometimes the larger part is below, and it may be spun by means of a string. In place of the seed a circular piece of wood or coconut shell may be used.

Rounded seeds and hard fruits or the pointed ends of coconut shells are spun with a string, like peg tops.



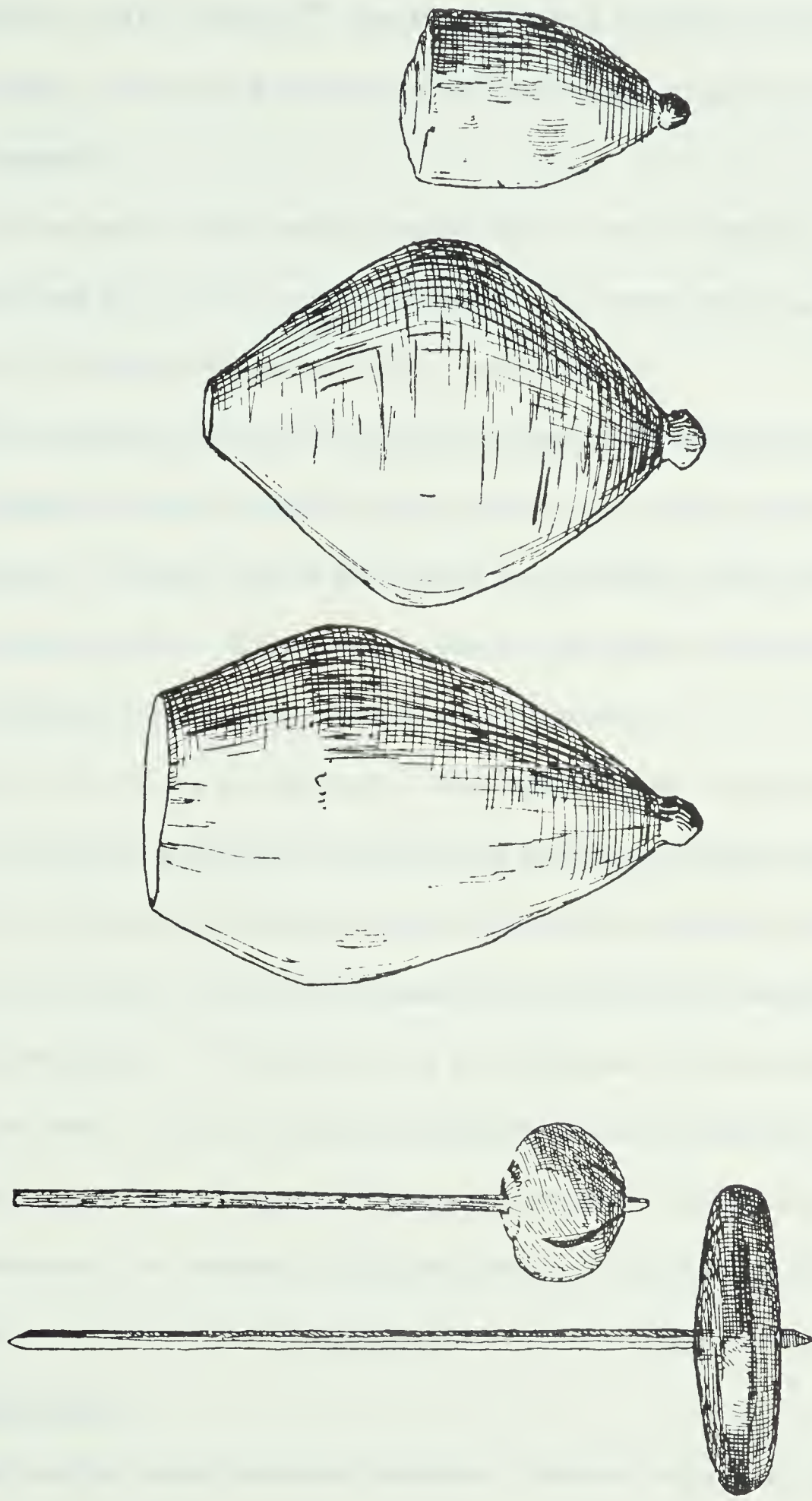


Figure 13. A collection of Melanesian spinning-tops from Torres Strait Islands (Haddon, 1912).





string figures or cats' cradle.<sup>29</sup> Neither of these mention the types of figures made, where or when the activity was played, and precisely who participated.

It does appear that making string figures was a popular pastime for boys and girls of all ages. However, any postulation as to the complexity, or variety of figures made, is impossible.

The material apparatus needed for playing string figures was readily available because children had access to the string used for making fish nets. Manus adults also made bark strings which they used for storing money. Children may have copied this technique for making strings they used when playing string figures.

From the above description, very little can be concluded about the role string figures played in maintaining traditional Manus culture. Playing with, and making string (if indeed they did), may have contributed to the learning of skills which children would need as adult net makers and repairers. Symbolism was an important characteristic of Manus world-view, and the symbolic representations produced by string figures could have helped children understand traditional symbolism. However, the extent of the contribution to the maintenance of a traditional world-view is not apparent from the available information.

## 5. Swimming

Swimming was a favourite pastime of Manus boys and girls of

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<sup>29</sup>M. Mead, op. cit., p. 22, 78.



all ages.

Swimming is not taught: the small waders imitate their slightly older brothers and sisters, and after floundering about in waist-deep water begin to strike out for themselves. Sure-footedness on land and swimming came almost together, so that the charm which is recited over a newly delivered woman says, "May you not have another child until this one can walk and swim." As soon as the children can swim a little, in a rough and tumble overhand stroke which has no style but great speed they are given small canoes of their own.<sup>30</sup>

Children spent the greater part of their day playing water games. Canoeing was extremely popular, but due to the rough and tumble nature of Manus play, canoeing invariably involved swimming. The popularity of water-sports is understandable when the environment of Manus children is considered--they lived over the water in a tropical climate.

Although Mead does not mention any forms of competitive swimming, the Manus children probably held impromptu races and competitions, but from her descriptions, the activity could only be classified as a pastime.

Swimming contributed significantly to the maintenance of traditional Manus culture, for the ability to swim was essential for survival. Swimming, for the Manus dweller, was as equally an important skill as walking; transport was always over water and production (catching fish) was primarily carried out in water. As swimming was not formally taught, this skill essential for survival (and therefore

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 26.





maintenance of an optimum population level) was learned through play.

## 6. Dancing

Although dancing was not as popular amongst the Manus as amongst other Melanesian societies, adults did dance at feasts held to celebrate successful economic transactions. Both men and women danced on such occasions, but the steps performed by the women were much simpler than those of the men. Young children of both sexes learned the basic steps by imitating their elders and practised for days following a feast.

Occasionally a child was incited to dance at home while their mother tapped out the rhythm on the floor. Girls learned the basic step of feet together and a swift leap to the side and return, very quickly. Boys had to practise much harder to master the rapid leg movements of the men's dances.

Boys of four and five begin to practice, and the day they master the art of catching the penis between the legs and then flinging it violently forward and from side to side, is a day of such pride that for weeks afterwards they perform the dance on every occasion, to the great and salacious amusement of their elders.<sup>31</sup>

Such play was basically an individual pastime but the larger recreational dances were group pastimes as everybody joined in; the men on the inside of a circle formed by the women, the drummers on the edge of the dance, and children moved freely from one group to another.

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 34.



Dances were held on the formal occasions of funerals and in preparation for war. Children also treated these occasions somewhat playfully as they joined in at will, and, in accordance with the permissive nature of their elders, were never stopped or relegated to an inferior position in the dance.

The role of dancing, as performed by children, was largely one of enculturation. The dance was an essential part of traditional Manus culture but not nearly as symbolic as in other previously examined Melanesian societies. Mead suggested that the men's dance was symbolic of defiance and scorn for their economic competitors,<sup>32</sup> and the movement described somewhat substantiates this hypothesis. Consequently, boys were learning the traditional attitude to commerce when they were present at the dances, and also learned the movements necessary to symbolize this attitude.

As dances were held following a feast at which all members of the society were present, the activity also contributed, to some extent, to the socialization of individuals and carriers of the culture.

## 7. Music

Music was played to a similar extent as dancing in Manus. Instruments were limited to slit-drums, gongs, and simple variations of these. Drumming always accompanied the group dances, and children imitated and practised the simple rhythms during, and for days

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid.



following, such occasions.

Children were encouraged to drum at a very early age, as these instruments were not only important for providing dance rhythms, but also as a form of communication.<sup>33</sup>

Singing was not particularly popular, but when children "were tired they gathered in groups and sang long monotonous songs over and over."<sup>34</sup> Unlike many Melanesian children, those of Manus did not have singing games, and the words of their simple "boredom songs" rarely told of tribal legends or historical occurrences.

Music played a role in maintaining traditional Manus culture because drums were an essential part of dance, and a means of communication. Therefore, the children learned, through play, the basic skills which contributed, perhaps indirectly, to enculturation and socialization. The more important role of drumming skills as a means of communication, was also learned through play. From the ages of five or six, children learned to recognize drum signals from their parents, and practised replying, or sending messages of their own.

Five of the seven play activities described appear to have made a significant contribution to the maintenance of traditional culture in Manus. Of the remaining activities, top spinning does not

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<sup>33</sup>Refer to Page 110.

<sup>34</sup>M. Mead, op. cit., p. 78.





appear to have fulfilled any role except to satisfy biological and psychological needs of the individual participant. From the paucity of data in the ethnographic record, it is not possible to tell whether string figures made a significant contribution to the maintenance of traditional Manus culture.

Canoeing, swimming, and spear throwing contributed to the maintenance of traditional culture by providing opportunity, and incentive, for children to learn skills essential for full participation in adult Manus life. Dancing and music also schooled the children in skills required of them, and provided a means of socialization for Manus adults. Because of the symbolism involved in dance, and the role of music in communication, these activities also contributed to the maintenance of a common world-view.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE FOUR CULTURES COMPARED

The four societies examined in detail in the preceding chapters were located on small islands north of New Guinea and south of the Equator. Consequently, climatic conditions were similar in all cases: an extremely wet monsoon period from approximately January to March, followed a period which was relatively dry in most years, and drought-stricken in occasional bad years. During the monsoon each of the societies experienced torrential rains and violent cyclones capable of demolishing all that stood in their paths. Because of these conditions, settlements were established on the southern sides of the islands where they were somewhat protected from the vicious northerly winds. Each island was surrounded by a coral reef which provided some protection against the wild seas which were products of any cyclonic storms. The reefs also formed still water harbours, shallow bays and excellent fishing grounds for the natives of Wogeo, Tanga, Goodenough and Manus.

The islands of Wogeo, Tanga and Goodenough were volcanic in origin, and, because of the rich soils and prevailing climatic conditions, were endowed with dense tropical jungles which abounded in natural foods, fertile garden plots, and numerous springs and streams which provided an excellent supply of fresh water.

Native villages varied in size from approximately sixty





households in Wogeo to twelve households in Tanga. The people of Manus and Goodenough societies lived in villages which were comprised of up to forty households. Further sub-groupings based on kinship were apparent in all villages. The land dwelling people grouped their houses around a central square which was used for ceremonial rites, feasts and recreational dances. These cleared open spaces were also used extensively by the children for many of their games and pastimes. For example, the Tangan game of pul um bo (handball) was played in the village square.<sup>1</sup>

Although the people in the societies cited possessed similar physical characteristics, their personalities varied from "jovial and quick-witted"<sup>2</sup> to "extremely temperamental."<sup>3</sup>

The people of the four societies all participated in trade to varying degrees. Except for the Manus, however, trading and specialization did not play a significant role in maintaining economic subsistence. Members of each household were responsible for producing sufficient food and artifacts for themselves, and the only significant specialization was based on sex within the household. Women were responsible for growing and harvesting crops, preparing meals, looking after children, and any incidental gathering of wild fruits, nuts,

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<sup>1</sup>Chapter III, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup>Bell's description of the Tangans, Chapter III, p. 43.

<sup>3</sup>Hogbin's description of the Wogeons, Chapter II, p. 20.



shell-fish, etc. The men made and fenced the gardens, hunted, fished, performed the majority of magical and religious rites, constructed the major artifacts (e.g., houses and trading canoes), and fought the wars. Young children were not expected to perform any specific tasks in the Melanesian societies examined.

Boys and girls played freely during the day, and many of their play activities were imitations of adult tasks and rituals. They frequently joined adult work parties and the ethnographers implied that Melanesian children enjoyed helping in work tasks to a similar extent as the children of our own societies. Unlike the people of modern western culture, Melanesian adults neither required their children to perform specific tasks, nor did they prevent them from assisting, even when such assistance decreased rather than increased productivity.

Group projects were organized by village leaders in Tanga and Wogeo. In both societies the clan chiefs were firmly established and respected by all the members of the clan. This respect depended primarily on the leader's assumed superior control over magical and spiritual phenomena. Because of these supposed powers the chiefs were expected to look after their respective subjects and one of their tasks was to organize community projects. For example, the kokwal in Wogeo organized projects such as building large canoes for inter-island transport, constructing a men's-house, and making and maintaining special gardens for feasts. (see Chapter II, p. 22).



The men of Manus and Goodenough also combined forces for similar tasks, but in contrast to the men of Tanga and Wogeo, they were not formally organized. Such tasks were considered individual responsibilities, but a man who decided to build a new house, or a large trading-canoe, invariably received unsolicited help of male relatives and friends. He, in turn, assisted them in similar undertakings.

All the societies had specialist magicians and sorcerers who sold their services when the opportunities arose. Such specialists were rarely able to depend on their magical powers for subsistence, and, therefore, also gardened, fished, and hunted to provide sustenance for themselves and their families. The degree of spiritual specialization varied in each society. To illustrate, in Goodenough, magicians were always employed at yam planting and harvest times; while the Manus, being a society of specialists, had some full-time sorcerers who were able to support themselves by selling good-luck charms.<sup>4</sup> Likewise in Tanga, magicians and sorcerers also sold their talents, but because all men supposedly had inherited super-natural powers, the demand was not consistent or great.

The Manus people, unlike those of the other three societies, were specialists and depended almost entirely upon trading their fish for the necessities and luxuries required for daily living. Consequently, the games and pastimes played by Manus children which may have

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<sup>4</sup>Chapter V, p. 22.





contributed to maintaining the material culture were associated with fishing (spear throwing, page 122), communications--necessary for trade (page 121), and repair and maintenance of fish-nets (page 126).

The natives of Goodenough, Tanga and Wogeo relied mainly on garden produce for their sustenance, and, in addition, local custom made them responsible for making all their own personal artifacts. Hunting, gathering and fishing activities contributed, to a variable extent, to the satisfaction of the food quest. The play activities of children in these societies contributed to the maintenance of culture by providing incentive and opportunity for the participants to learn essential adult skills. To illustrate, the spear throwing games of the Goodenough people developed skills they needed as pig and kangaroo hunters;<sup>5</sup> hide and seek, as played by Tanga children, provided practice in recognizing bird-calls, and seeking out their sources--this was an important technique in the hunting and gathering activities of this particular society.<sup>6</sup>

Just as the methods of obtaining food were similar in three of the societies, so too was the utilization of tools in daily chores. Digging-sticks were widely used by the gardeners of Wogeo, Tanga and Goodenough. Bone, shell, and bamboo knives were also common tools and were used extensively for harvesting (crops such as sugar-cane grown

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<sup>5</sup>Chapter IV, p. 106.

<sup>6</sup>Chapter III, p. 91.



by Goodenough natives), preparing food for cooking, cutting up meat and fish, and shaping and decorating artifacts. Because of the volcanic origin of the above islands, hard stone was plentiful and simple stone-axes together with stone adzes and scrapers were used to assist in fashioning wooden artifacts. Stone flakes were also used as tips on spears and arrows used for warfare and hunting. Adults were required to make their own tools, and because of the children's tendencies to imitate their elders, it is probable that they also played with self-made tools similar to those described above. Manus people used tools, but unlike the members of the other three societies studied, they rarely made their own artifacts. Because the people of Manus were not hunters, gatherers, or cultivators, and because they acquired most of their artifacts through trade, their tools were used principally for making canoes, building houses, or fishing. Some shell and bone tools (such as knives and scrapers) were made by the Manus, but their apparent concept of comparative advantage<sup>7</sup> tended to result in their acquiring most articles through trade. The children, however, had complete access to any tools used in Manus, and undoubtedly learned their respective uses through play.

In addition to a variety of specially made weapons, many household tools were used in warfare. For instance, spears which

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<sup>7</sup>Comparative advantage is an economic concept which explains how producers benefit by specialized production and trading of a single commodity.





were used for hunting and fishing, were also the principal weapons used by the warriors of the four societies. The Tangan warriors used seven varieties of throwing and thrusting spears, but, because of the type of battles fought, thrusting spears were more commonly used by natives of Goodenough and Wogeo. The Manus warriors, however, preferred to defend their villages from war-canoes; for such encounters accuracy with throwing-spears was essential for success. Spear games and pastimes were played by the young males, and occasionally by the adults,<sup>8</sup> in all the examined societies. The games and pastimes described usually involved throwing a spear at live, or movable targets, and while the developed skill increased the future warriors' effectiveness, these activities probably contributed still more to the skills required of future hunters. Other commonly used weapons were clubs, bows and arrows, axes, and slings.

The people of the four societies were prone to fighting and local battles were fought in order to avenge some previous injustice, to acquire status, or, as in the case of the Manus, for economic reasons. The preferred form of attack in all instances was to surprise the victims, just before dawn, with a small raiding party and kill them as they slept. In order to be successful attackers, the members of the raiding party had to be skilled in the arts of self-concealment and stealth; the attacked, if they hoped to survive, had to flee quickly

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<sup>8</sup>Chapter III, p. 59-60.



and hide themselves in their immediate environment. Consequently, the games of hide and seek (as played by Tangan and Goodenough children) provided valuable practice in techniques of considerable use in preserving their lives if they were attacked, and of assisting in successful offensives against traditional or acquired enemies.

Because of the nature of warfare, the people of the mainland societies barricaded their villages with bamboo or wooden fences. The Tangans took the added precaution of constructing fortified houses. Gardens were also enclosed by high fences, but this was done to prevent stealing (apparently not very effectively), and to keep pigs and larger animals away from the crops. The people of Manus had a natural fortification provided by their environment, as any raids conducted against them had to be via the water which surrounded their settlements.

The people of all the societies used canoes extensively for war-raids, as the majority of attacks were made on isolated villages or nearby islands. Due to the vegetation and topography of the islands, canoes provided the quickest and easiest method of transport. The Melanesian people studied were skilled sailors, and water-craft, of widely varying designs, were used not only for warfare, but for travelling to distant settlements (or fishing grounds) for social and economic reasons. The canoes were all of the dug-out variety, and had a single out-rigger lashed to the hull to give added stability. The Melanesian sea-farers used matted sails extensively, but preferred



to punt their canoes in shallow waters. In Manus, the canoe was probably more important than in any of the other three societies, and the Manus people appeared to have the largest variety of water-craft.<sup>9</sup>

The ethnographers cited described canoeing play-activities only in Wogeo and Manus. It is probable that the children of Tanga and Goodenough had canoeing pastimes and games which prepared them for their adult roles in their respective societies.

The social organization in the four societies was based on kinship. Goodenough and Manus people recognized patrilineal affiliations; Wogeo kinship was also patrilineal, but had as well a matrilineal division which was important in certain ceremonies and marriage alliances; Tanga natives recognized a matrilineal system of kinship which was organized into sub-clans (or family groups) known as borats. With the exception of the Goodenough patrilineal grouping, the nuclear family formed the most basic group within each kinship system; these, in turn, comprised a larger sub-clan which was essentially an extended family group. In Goodenough, children recognized all the brothers and sisters of their respective biological parents as their mothers and fathers (i.e., children usually recognized a number of parents). Consequently, relatives who would be considered cousins in present Western civilizations, were brothers and sisters to the natives of

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<sup>9</sup>Chapter V, p. 108.





Goodenough. The sub-clans in this society were formed by the adult brothers and their families.

Political organization, law and social control were administered by sub-clan and clan chiefs in all but the Manus societies. In Manus such matters were conducted by a loosely structured village democracy. However, in Manus, as in Wogeo, Tanga and Goodenough social control was maintained primarily by fear of supernatural powers. In the latter three societies the chiefs were believed to command a greater influence over the spirits, and, consequently, their wishes and verdicts were respected by the less powerful members of the social group. The warlike Tangans also expected their headmen to be superior warriors and men of forceful personality; the weak were afforded little recognition. Spiritual control in Manus was maintained by the concept of Sir Ghost, and the belief that all Sir Ghosts were equally powerful contributed to the relative success of their loose democracy.<sup>10</sup>

In the four societies, breaches of social conduct (crimes) could usually be settled by payment of compensatory fines. If, however, the recompense was not forthcoming, or was considered inadequate, the injured parties had the right to resort to the "rule of the club," and did not hesitate to murder the criminal, or to conduct a war-raid against his village, clan, or sub-clan settlement. If criminals were

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<sup>10</sup>Chapter V, p. 111.



not apprehended or observed committing a felony, the victims of their actions resorted to magic to discover who had wronged them. Once named, nothing could reverse the decision and if compensation was not paid, physical violence became inevitable.

Many local battles were fought as a result of some infringement of property rights. In the three land-dwelling societies, land was considered the property of the extended family group. Certain portions of the land became the property of individual families during the time they were cultivating it. The Manus, because of their environment, were not concerned with land ownership, but designated fishing grounds (such as a particular part of a reef) were frequently recognized as the property of a particular village or family group.

The people of the four societies had a similar concept of ownership concerning domesticated animals, garden produce and artifacts. Unless these items were traded, they were considered the property of their makers. Consequently, while men owned the gardens, the women often owned the produce of these gardens.<sup>11</sup>

Personal property was considered a wealth symbol in all the societies studied, and wealth, more than any other single factor, determined the status of the individuals within the societies. Pigs as a form of wealth were particularly important in the mainland societies,

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<sup>11</sup>Chapter II, p. 26.





but Manus people (due, probably, to the difficulty of keeping pigs) were mainly concerned with accumulating monetary wealth.

Status also depended on magical powers as has been indicated earlier, and the chiefs, together with their families, enjoyed an elevated position on the social scale as a result of these attributed powers. In Tanga, successful warriors also demanded a certain amount of respect and had a considerable voice in public decision-making.

Apart from status as determined by wealth, magical power and success in battle, the Manus also recognized a minor class structure based on heredity. The upper class, the members of which were invariably the wealthier minority group, were called lapans, and the lower majority group belonged to the lau class.<sup>12</sup>

Social status did not appear to affect significantly the play patterns of the children in the four societies. Except for the Wogon game of mock spear battles where leadership was assumed by the kokwal's son,<sup>13</sup> the children mixed freely, and the ethnographical reports did not indicate any special play activities, or roles within play, for the children of the wealthy or social elite.

The young members of the societies were considered as equals within their own society, and all were subjected to the same initiation

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<sup>12</sup>Theoretically, the lapans had no more say than lau in public matters. See Chapter V, p. 113.

<sup>13</sup>Chapter II, p. 33.



rites. Girls were rarely exposed to any physical initiation ceremonies as their entrance to adulthood was usually heralded by their first menstruation. Boys, however, were subjected to various physical hardships and, except in Manus, were required to bleed before they were considered young men.<sup>14</sup> Initiation for all boys and girls under discussion also included learning the spiritual and magical traditions of their respective societies. From this time certain types of play activities were not permitted (e.g., the children's common pastime of imitating tribal religious rites and dances), and their free play activities were replaced by work tasks. For the societies examined, it appeared that the newly initiated spent most of their leisure time in their respective huts,<sup>15</sup> or seeking future marriage partners.

Actions and beliefs of the Melanesian people included in the study depended, to a large extent, on their world-view, or philosophy of life. Although world-view is all-encompassing, examination of certain traditional beliefs, rituals, and symbolic representations led to greater understanding and knowledge of the people.

Religious rituals and beliefs varied widely throughout the societies covered, but all believed in some spirit-life after death, and all had extreme respect for the powers of such spirits. With the exception of the Manus, the people did not automatically expect

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<sup>14</sup>Chapter II, p. 27 ; Chapter III, p. 51.

<sup>15</sup>Special sleeping huts-- see Chapter IV, p. 87.





protection or assistance from the spirits of the dead. Instead, rituals were conducted to keep the spirits happy, and to try and gain a little support from supernatural sources, before any major undertaking. However, the assistance, if forthcoming, was believed to come from some traditional spirit, and not from the spirits of the recently deceased.

In Manus, however, the individual Sir Ghosts were expected to care for their earthly wards, and give assistance in all daily tasks.<sup>16</sup>

Natives of Tanga and Goodenough associated the spirits with the phenomenon of dreaming; they believed that all living animals, including man, possessed a spirit which was free to leave the body. Consequently, they believed that when they dreamed the spirit left the body, took part in some adventure (often with the spirits of other earthly acquaintances), and finally returned. Death, therefore, was interpreted as a permanent departure of the spirit, and no other real distinction was drawn between dreaming, unconsciousness, and death.

Members of the four societies also believed in the powers of magic and discriminated between white and black magic.<sup>17</sup> The amount of magic practised varied throughout the societies but the Manus relied on sorcery least of all. In extreme cases, where Sir

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<sup>16</sup>Chapter V, p. 113.

<sup>17</sup>The difference between white and black magic was noted in Chapter IV, p. 80.





Ghost had not fulfilled his obligations, they resorted to black magic to punish wrong-doers, or white magic to alleviate any continuing forms of misfortune.

It was commonly believed by three of the Melanesian groups that the body could be cleansed by specific physical rituals. If the Wogeon and Tangan people felt their body had been invaded by evil spirits, they subjected themselves to rituals which involved bleeding. Natives of Goodenough, however, believed that sea-water was the universal cleansing agent. Rituals involving bleeding, or bathing in sea-water, were conducted in cases of illness, or on any occasion when it was believed that people had angered the spirits, or had come in contact with any evil spirits. Manus people apparently had no similar belief, as their faith in Sir Ghost made such rituals unnecessary. The cleansing rituals were also an important part of initiation ceremonies for boys, and, as previously noted, the Manus boys were not subjected to any physical violation before being admitted to adult society.

Music and dance were significant characteristics of most rituals. The variety of instruments and chants observed have been described in the preceding chapters. Drums were common to all societies, and were apparently most important for providing the rhythm for ritual dances. Various other instruments had special ritual roles. For example, playing pan-pipes was an important part of the boy's initiation ritual in Wogeo and Tanga, and the playing of the jew's harp was recognized as an effective contributor to courting rituals in



Goodenough societies. Singing was also important in certain rituals, and the chants often conveyed appropriate legends and stories.<sup>18</sup>

Dances were, probably, a more important aspect of rituals than music. Very few occasions were celebrated, or prepared for, without the performance of a particular traditional dance. The steps varied in intricacy, but religious dances were always performed with utmost care. Participants went to a great deal of trouble to dress and decorate themselves appropriately. Tangan warriors believed firmly that the success or failure of a war-raid depended more on the pre-war dance than on any other single factor.

Music and dance, in addition to being important components of traditional rituals, were favourite recreational pursuits of natives of all ages. The younger children spent a great deal of time imitating the more serious dances of their elders, and through play acquired an appreciation of traditional steps, dance patterns, and basic tribal rhythms. Such must have been the case in the four societies, as the ethnographers did not allude to any formal instruction in dance or music, and yet indicated that most, if not all, the people knew the basic skills required for participation.

The dance patterns and musical instruments were common forms of symbolism throughout the societies. Totemism was also a

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<sup>18</sup>Chapter IV, p. 83.





distinct, but not a common feature of Melanesian symbolism. Good-enough people observed a strict form of totemism based on inherited taboos. Each kinship group (or extended family) identified themselves with a traditional animal or bird symbol; the object of their totem was never killed or eaten. Tangan clans also adopted animal or bird totems but their observance of totemism was not as strict as the Goodenough observance, as Tangans freely exploited their totem image for food or artifacts.

In Manus, the skull of Sir Ghost served as a symbol of his existence. If the skull was lost at death (e.g., death due to drowning and the body not being recovered) a coconut, or some similar object, was adopted as the symbolic representation of Sir Ghost.

Symbolic representations were important in most magical and religious rites. Manus people treasured good-luck charms and warriors always wore a carved human head into battle; Wogeon magicians used objects such as stones, or pieces of wood, to transfer their spells from one person to another; odd shaped rocks and old rotten tree trunks were often the objects of Goodenough myths and frequently believed to be the homes of evil spirits. However, symbolic representations were not found to be consistent throughout the four societies, and it appeared that the variety and extent of symbolism was related to the role of magic in maintaining social stability.

Cannibalism, as practised by the people of the three land-dwelling societies, was a ceremonial rite. Victims of war-raids were



eaten because it was commonly believed that such an action constituted the extreme insult, and showed the greatest contempt for the vanquished. In these societies, human flesh was not eaten because of personal lust, and the strictest ritual was observed at cannibalistic feasts; war-raids were not conducted for the purpose of obtaining such flesh, but the warrior who had killed and eaten an enemy received respect and admiration from his contemporaries.

Because the societies were relatively isolated from each other, social customs varied considerably. The variations which occurred appeared to depend on differences in world-view and environment. Differences do not seem to have been significant among the land-dwelling societies, but the habits of Manus people as has been already noted, were significantly different.

All the people examined were particularly dress-conscious on religious and festive occasions. Men and women spent a great deal of time decorating themselves with scars and clay-based paints, and wore highly decorative apparel which was made, and reserved, for such occasions. Clothing was not particularly important for everyday activities, and most children went naked. Once initiated into the adult society, the women always wore some covering below the waist, and men covered themselves with shells<sup>19</sup> or lap-laps.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>For example, Chapter V, p. 118.

<sup>20</sup>For example, Chapter III, p. 54.



The only people--of those examined--who were particularly conscious of personal cleanliness, were the natives of Goodenough; they bathed daily and frequently used coconut oil as soap.<sup>21</sup> The people of the remaining societies only washed before festive occasions, and body cleanliness was not considered important; most people only bathed when they went swimming, or happened to be caught in heavy showers of rain.

Habitations were similar in all societies. They were usually elevated, and had gabled or circular thatched roofs. Manus houses, because of their location, were built on a network of stilts, and at low tide the buildings were perched high above the mud flats on which they were constructed. Mainland dwellings were less permanent than those of Manus; the Manus did not have ready access to building materials, and, because of the environment, houses were not easily constructed. Consequently, a Manus house was not abandoned when one of its inhabitants died.

Training and education of the young members of the societies were not formally organized. Children learned the skills required of them by imitating their elders, and through play-activities. Certain religious and spiritual traditions were formally explained during initiation ceremonies, and on some rare occasions, skills were formally

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<sup>21</sup>Chapter IV, p. 86.





taught.<sup>22</sup>

Theoretically, marriages were arranged and strict rules observed as to who could marry (these arrangements and rules were not always observed in practice). All the societies prohibited marriages within a single kin group, and all recognized polygyny. However, the latter was not extensively practised, except in Wogeo where a number of wives was considered a symbol of wealth and status.

From the societies examined, it appeared that the people sustained and cared for the older members of their respective family groups. However, age alone was not sufficient for respect--except perhaps in Goodenough.<sup>23</sup> In the other three societies, the old people were cared for, but were respected only if they were wealthy (particularly in Manus), had an impressive war-record (Tanga), or were believed to possess special magical powers.

Funerals were elaborate rituals accompanied by organized mourning. In all the societies the spirits of the dead were considered powerful. Thus funerals were carefully administered in order to avoid angering the spirits and incurring their wrath. Tangans believed that the only really powerful spirits were those of deceased warriors, and, therefore, special funeral rites were reserved for

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<sup>22</sup>For example, Tangan children were taught to swim: Chapter III, p. 70.

<sup>23</sup>Chapter IV, p. 87-88.



such people.

Although many cultural differences were apparent, it can be seen that in the four societies examined, many aspects of Melanesian life were common, or at least similar. However, the differences which exist show clearly the difficulties involved in generalizing about Melanesian culture and the role of play-activities in maintaining culture. If the differences observed were significant (and the author believes they were), the possibilities of other major differences are very real when the numbers and locations of other traditional Melanesian societies are considered.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>For example, the Arapesh (M. Mead. Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies) and The Kuma people (M. Reay. The Kuma: Freedom and Conformity in the New Guinea Highlands) who lived in central New Guinea, had a different way of life from the coastal dwelling people observed in this study.





## CHAPTER VII

### SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to discover to what extent, if any, twelve traditional Melanesian play activities (namely, canoeing, crossing the bridge, hide and seek, spear throwing, top spinning, handball, string figures, music, dancing, swimming and finger games) contributed to the survival of traditional culture in four Melanesian societies (namely, Wogeo, Tanga, Goodenough Island and Manus).

In attempting to draw conclusions relative to this study it is acknowledged that such conclusions must necessarily be made with serious reservations stemming from at least three considerations. Firstly, the original ethnographic studies upon which this thesis was based, were conducted by ethnographers who did not share the purposes and theoretical frame of reference of the writer. Therefore, observations of games and pastimes were not originally made as systematically, and in as great a depth as hopefully would be made by a contemporary ethnographer who might combine the conceptual frame of reference of a trained anthropologist and a specialist in play theories. Secondly, it is acknowledged that for two phenomena to correlate in time does not necessarily imply a cause and effect relationship. Therefore, while some tenuous conclusions have been made, it is acknowledged that they have been made gingerly with the full knowledge that much more precise data would ideally have been desirable. Thirdly,



the notion of cultural survival involves the social psychological process of socialization or enculturation and these processes, in turn, involve the process of learning. More specifically, it involves the psychological principle of learning frequently referred to as the principle of transfer. This fundamental principle of education psychology states that for learning in one situation to transfer to another situation (e.g., from a child's spear-throwing game to spear-throwing as an aspect of adult work) there needs to be like components in both situations, and these like components must be consciously recognized by the would-be-learners. Again, this principle as applied in practice was not specifically referred to in the ethnographers' reports.

The selected play-activities were rarely observed in all of the four selected societies, and often the same activity was played differently by participants living in different societies. Table I represents the distribution of the activities throughout the societies, and classifies them according to the categories of games and pastimes. Certain activities, such as spear-throwing in Wogeo, were categorized as both games and pastimes; other activities were classified as a game in one society, and a pastime in another (e.g., canoeing was a competitive game in Wogeo, but described as a pastime in Manus). It is probable that many of the activities reported as pastimes were played competitively and were, therefore, also games. However, unless the ethnographers specifically mentioned competition, such activities were classified only as pastimes.



TABLE I

## DISTRIBUTION OF PLAY ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY	SOCIETY							
	Wogeo		Tanga		Goodenough		Manus	
	P*	G**	P	G	P	G	P	G
Canoeing		X					X	
Crossing the Bridge				X		X		
Hide and Seek				X		X		
Spear Throwing	X	X		X		X	X	
Tops			X				X	
Handball				X				
String Figures	X				X		X	
Music	X		X		X		X	
Dance			X		X		X	
Swimming	X		X				X	
Swinging			X					
Finger-Games					X			

P\* - PASTIME

G\*\* - GAME

NOTE: The activities have been placed under the headings of games and pastimes according to the way in which they were played in the particular society (Games and pastimes have been defined, for the purpose of this study, in Chapter 1, p. 7).





Because the descriptions of play-activities varied, all the games and pastimes played within a society were described in detail. Pastimes were observed more frequently than games. Of the twenty-nine variations of the play activities described, twenty were classified as pastimes, and only nine as games. This ratio of pastimes to games is consistent with the general pattern of play activities as indicated in Appendix A, Part II.

The apparent lack of vigorous competition through games does not parallel observations reported about dominant adult characteristics, or adult activities of the societies examined. Adults in all societies, for example, were particularly interested in enhancing their social status, and such elevated status as was possible, was attained primarily through displays of wealth obtained through highly competitive work or trade. Moreover, as a generalization it may be said that the majority of the adult males reported upon were quick to resort to physical violence when provoked in any way. Thus, whatever the attributed source of these behavioural predispositions, most adult males were described as having warlike tendencies. Such an aggressive attitude is usually associated with highly competitive individuals. The Manus were probably the most competitive group studied, and the complete absence of competition in their play-activities, as reported by Mead, is difficult to understand or explain.

On the other hand, play-activities, in many instances, appeared to contribute significantly to the survival of the traditional cultures



in the four societies studied. However, the summary provided in Table II suggests that certain of the selected activities contributed much more than others. Often the same activity seemed to have contributed to one aspect of cultural survival in one society, and to a different aspect in another society. Then too, the selected activities tended to contribute more to certain aspects of cultural survival than to others; and three of the twelve activities appeared to make no significant contribution to the maintenance of traditional culture.

It appears that canoeing, spear-throwing, music, dance and swimming all contributed to three different aspects of cultural survival. Of these, canoeing, spear-throwing and swimming appeared to contribute to the maintenance of the material culture of the societies in which they were played. Music and dance assisted in maintaining the traditional world-view. All the above activities were seen as important in socializing and enculturating the future carriers of the respective cultures or sub-cultures in which they were played. Although these play activities were not recorded in each of the societies (e.g., there was no mention of canoeing as a play activity in Tanga or Goodenough, or recreational swimming in Goodenough) the study of the various sub-cultures suggests that they may have been omitted from the ethnographical reports because they were not pertinent to the purposes of the ethnographers who made the original studies.

Hide and seek, as it was played in Tanga and Goodenough, seems to have contributed significantly to the maintenance of these





TABLE II

## CONTRIBUTION OF PLAY TO CULTURAL SURVIVAL

ACTIVITY	CONDITIONS FOR CULTURAL SURVIVAL							
	Pro	Pop	Soc	Nor	Lea	Com	Wor	Nil
Canoeing	wm		wm			wm		
Crossing the Bridge			t		t			g
Hide and Seek	tg	tg	tg				t	
Spear Throwing	wgm	wtgm	wtgm	t	t		t	
Tops								tm
Handball			t				t	
String Figures	wg						wg	m*
Music			wtgm			tgm	wtgm	
Dance			tgm			g	tgm	
Swimming	wm	wtm	wm					
Swinging								t
Finger Games								g

\*Insufficient data for assessment (See Chapter V, p. 126).

KEY: Pro - production repair and maintenance of material goods.  
 Pop - maintenance of optimum population level.  
 Soc - socialization or enculturation.  
 Nor - maintenance of a normative order.  
 Lea - provision of leadership.  
 Com - maintenance of communications.  
 Wor - maintenance of a common world-view.  
 Nil - no apparent contribution to cultural survival.

NOTE: The letters indicate the societies in which the activity appeared to fulfil the particular condition required for the maintenance of traditional culture. The societies indicated by the letters are:

w - Wogeo; t - Tanga; g - Goodenough Island; m - Manus.



respective cultures. In both societies the game provided an opportunity for children to learn skills necessary for the production, maintenance and repair of material goods (including food); for the maintenance of population (concealment in war), and for the enculturation of the newer members into the traditional values of their respective societies. To further illustrate, the chant which accompanied the Tangan version of the game seems to have contributed to the maintenance of traditional Tangan world-view.

A quantity of material has been published concerning Melanesian string figures (see Appendix A, Part II, p. 224 ). However, there was no mention of this pastime being played in Tanga, and in the remaining societies the perpetuation of this activity from one generation to another, while in itself was evidence of cultural continuity, there appears to be little data to support any conclusions regarding possible transfer value from one aspect of culture learning in the lives of one generation to application to another aspect of cultural learning in the later lives of the same generation. Because of the symbolic aspect of the pastime, it may have contributed to the maintenance of world-view. Future net-makers and weavers also obtained some valuable practice in string-making and manipulation. The lack of information concerning string figures in Manus prohibited the author from drawing any conclusion concerning the role of the activity in this particular society.

The activities which did not appear to make any significant contribution in providing transfer value in a given culture (other than



satisfying the individual's basic biological and psychological needs) were finger-games (Goodenough Island), swinging (Tanga), and top spinning (Tanga and Manus). Crossing the bridge is considered to have contributed to socialization and development of leadership traits in Tanga, but did not appear to make any contribution to cultural survival in Goodenough.

It must be emphasized that the conditions required for cultural survival are interdependent. Consequently, any play-activity which contributed to one aspect of cultural survival, probably also contributed to other aspects of cultural survival (for example, any activity which contributes in any way to the maintenance of traditional knowledge and beliefs, also assisted in maintaining a traditional worldview). However, as indicated previously, only principal contributions of play activities in maintaining traditional culture have been included in this study.

Through the examination of contributions made by play activities to the maintenance of traditional Melanesian culture in Wogeo, Tanga, Goodenough Island and Manus, it appears that a latent function of play was to enable children to learn skills necessary for successful adult participation with the society. Therefore, Bell's hypothesis is supported in that "the primitive child's school is its playground, and his playground is everywhere;"<sup>1</sup> skills and attitudes were learned by

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<sup>1</sup>F. L. S. Bell, "The Play Life of the Tanga," *op. cit.*, p. 61.





playing, and only when play did not fulfil this purpose were children formally instructed by their elders.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

With the reservations acknowledged in the second paragraph of this chapter, the technique used to examine and record the cultural characteristics of societies appears to have been adequate for the purposes of this exploratory study. Moreover, the knowledge of these societies gleaned through this cultural analysis seems to have supported the interpretation of the role of play in the societies studied. The stated conditions required for cultural survival seems to have provided an adequate basis of determining whether or not play activities did contribute to the maintenance of traditional Melanesian culture in Wogeo, Tanga, Goodenough Island and Manus.

Considering the above, and having experienced the problems and rewards of examining a possible role of play-activities in primitive societies, the author makes the following recommendations:

1. Similar studies should be carried out in other Melanesian societies in order to test the conclusions of this study as to the role of play in perpetuating cultural survival. The limited number of societies treated in this thesis makes any generalizations undesirable concerning the whole of Melanesia.
2. Similar studies could be conducted for the societies of other primitive cultures (e.g., Micronesia, North American Indians,



Eskimos, etc.). Play-activities have already been collected for some primitive cultures, and, if the place of observation of games and pastimes has been carefully recorded, such collections provide ideal material for cultural studies and could, therefore, be used by future researchers.

3. Because of differences which may exist between societies belonging to the same cultural group, any future collections of play-activities should note, where possible, the specific location of all activities recorded.

4. In order to avoid omitting relevant information, future studies of this type may be more meaningful if all the play-activities of chosen societies are examined in a systematic manner utilizing observation report forms based on the classification scheme outlined in the appendix of this study, or an improved system.





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## APPENDIX A

- I. A CLASSIFICATION OF PLAY ACTIVITIES
- II. A COLLECTION AND CLASSIFICATION OF  
MELANESIAN PLAY ACTIVITIES



## I. A CLASSIFICATION OF PLAY ACTIVITIES

As a result of a review of classification systems previously used for games and pastimes, together with a realization of the respective shortcomings, the following classification of play activities was formulated in consultation with Professor R. G. Glassford.<sup>1</sup>

This particular classification attempts to place games according to the four major observable characteristics of basic organization, the situation in which they are played, the body movements involved, and the internal properties which constitute the activity (See Fig. 14). Each of the four characteristics are subdivided into a number of observable possibilities so that each activity may be placed in all of the four major sections of the system. Presumably, classification is simple and clear-cut at the upper level, and becomes increasingly difficult, and subjective, at lower levels. All of the possibilities are physically observable characteristics of the activity, and, where combinations exist, these are listed according to the order suggested in Fig. 14, and not in the order of importance as presumed by the researcher using the system.

By referring to the schematic outline, and the included definitions of each characteristic, it is hoped that all researchers observing directly, or studying the same complete written description of an

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<sup>1</sup>R. G. Glassford, Professor of Physical Education, University of Alberta, 1967-68.





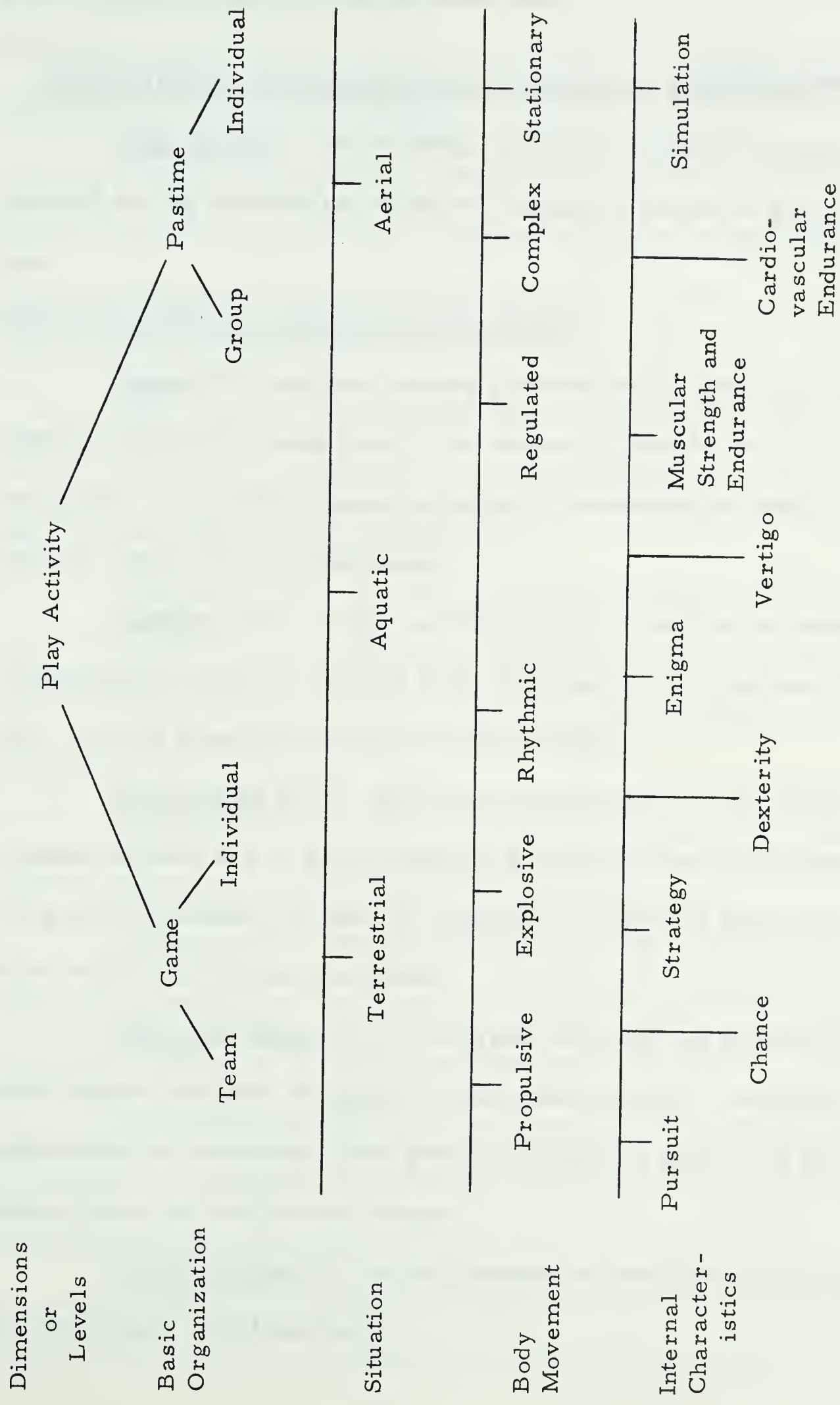


Figure 14. Four Dimensional Classification of Play Activities



activity, would classify it in the same way.

## OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS AND SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION

Play Activity: any voluntary activity, physical or mental, pursued for the satisfaction it affords during the period of participation.

### FIRST DIMENSION: BASIC ORGANIZATION

Game (G): any play activity governed by temporary or permanent rules which takes place in situations of fixed boundaries of time and space, and exhibits characteristics of competition by which winners or losers may be determined.

Pastime (P): any play activity in which there is an absence of competition, may or may not have temporary rules, and may take place outside fixed boundaries of time and space.

Team Game (G-t): any game in which two or more players compete against two or more opposing players so that the outcome of the game will depend on joint, or collective, efforts in such a way that there will be more than one winner.

Individual Game (G-i): any game in which one person competes against another, or against established norms, or objectives contained within the structure of the game, or against a group. In such games there can only be one winner.

Group Pastime (P-g): any pastime in which two or more people participate simultaneously.





Individual Pastime (P-i): any pastime in which one person can obtain satisfaction.

## SECOND DIMENSION: SITUATION

Terrestrial (Te): those games and pastimes which use the ground as the base for the major activities involved in their fulfilment.

Aquatic (Aq): those games and pastimes which are primarily carried out on, or in, water.

Aerial (Ae): those games and pastimes in which the satisfaction afforded occurs while the body is moving through the air.

## THIRD DIMENSION: BODY MOVEMENT

Propulsive (Pro): propulsive movement in play activity occurs when the body is moved in a single direction for a period of time, either by external forces, or repeated forces applied from within the body itself.

Explosive (Exp): explosive movement occurs when a maximum effort is applied in a single gross body movement.

Rhythmic (Rhy): rhythmic movement occurs when strong and weak forces are applied by certain groups of muscles within the body, in a definite sequence, over a period of time.

Regulated (Reg): regulated movement occurs when the amplitude of the force exerted by certain muscle groups is maintained at a constant level over a period of time.

Complex (Com): complex movement occurs when there is more than one of the above types of movement significantly involved



in the fulfilment of an activity.

Stationary (Sta): stationary activities are those in which body movement does not play a significant role in their fulfilment.

#### FOURTH DIMENSION: INTERNAL CHARACTERISTICS

Pursuit (Purs): those activities involving the elements of chase with a view to reaching or obtaining.

Chance (Chan): those activities involving the mode of occurrence of phenomena uncontrolled by human capacity or purpose.

Strategy (Stra): those activities involving the art of devising and employing plans towards a goal.

Dexterity (Dext): those activities involving elements of physical skill.

Enigma (Enig): those activities involving elements of mental skill outside the realm of strategy.

Vertigo (Vert): those activities involving the loss of body stability and/or equilibrium.

Muscular Strength and Endurance (Musc): those activities in which the force applied by certain muscle groups of the participant's person will determine the level of satisfaction and success.

Cardiovascular Endurance (Card): those activities in which the cardio-respiratory fitness of the participant will determine the level of satisfaction and success.

Simulation (Simu): those activities which are based upon elements of pretence and/or mimicry.



Cumulative (Cum): those activities which are essentially composed of more than one of the above-mentioned internal characteristics.

The symbolic system is based on the opening letters of each of the characteristics, with the number of letters employed to designate the 'dimension' in which the classification is made. For example, one letter indicates that the classification is one of basic organization, while four letters indicates the classification is one of internal characteristics. Where a number of classification criteria are met in single dimension these are included in parentheses after the appropriate single set of symbols. For example, "Com (Pro, Reg)" signifies that the activity has complex movement made up of "propulsive" and "regulated" components. Each dimension is then separated by a semi-colon; for every activity examined there should be four sets of lettered symbols indicating the "slots" selected for that activity at the different dimensions of the classification system. For example, competitive cross-country running would be classified as--G-i; Te; Pro; Cumu (Card, Stra)--indicating that it was an individual game, takes place on the ground, involves mainly propulsive movement, and has the cumulated internal characteristics of cardio-vascular fitness and strategy.

The concept of a multi-dimensional approach to the classification of games has the distinct advantage of being flexible inasmuch as dimensions may be added. It is suggested that a fifth dimension of "Material Aids" could be included to make a more complete





descriptive form of classification.

However, it is not envisaged that contextual observations should become part of this system, but should form a supplementary means of classification to be employed where applicable, and when necessary. Such a system of classification, or methodology for observation, would include such things as the age, sex, and status of participants; social or religious significance of games and pastimes; seasonal habits concerning play; etc. These observable characteristics of play could not be made from a description of the activity itself, and researchers hoping to use this type of information would be required to undertake extensive field observations, or background research into the cultural behaviour of the people being studied.



## II. A COLLECTION OF TRADITIONAL MELANESIAN PLAY ACTIVITIES

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### INTRODUCTION

The following list of traditional Melanesian games and pastimes does not pretend to be all inclusive, as only those activities reasonably well described by first hand observers have been included. Obviously, many other games and pastimes existed in traditional Melanesia, but due to the difficulty of contact with various Melanesian societies (caused by geographic barriers, and the social hazard of cannibalism), and the disregard of many ethnographers for this aspect of culture, a great number of play activities were probably not recorded. Many works make passing references to children playing in the sun, or romping on the beach, but fail to describe the way in which they were playing, or romping; such references have not been included in this study.

For organizational purposes, the play activities have been listed alphabetically in four groups according to the first dimension of the classification system; viz., Individual Games, Team Games, Individual Pastimes and Group Pastimes. The principal references have been included at the end of the respective descriptions, and full bibliographic information concerning these references has been included in the thesis bibliography. Also included, where possible, is the specific location of each of the play activities. It is obvious that all games and pastimes were not played by all the people living in





Melanesia.

Finally, the author apologizes for using a mixture of English and native names for the various activities. For the ease of reading, English names have been used where possible, even though such a practice is dangerous, and the tendency to interpret traditional Melanesian habits into western European "knowns" can be grossly misleading.

#### A. INDIVIDUAL GAMES

##### 1. Alevwaligi (Wallaby)

Classification: G-i; Te; Com (Pro, Exp); Cumu (Purs, Simu).

The game was played by a group of boys, one of whom was selected to be the "wallaby". The remainder formed a ring around the chosen one who imitated the actions of a wallaby while the others pranced around him. Suddenly, the wallaby broke from the center of the circle at top speed, and was hotly pursued by the remainder of the participants who endeavoured to catch him and return him to the site of the original circle.

Location: Trans-Fly, New Guinea.

Reference: F. E. Williams, Papuans of the Trans-Fly.  
Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 444, 1936.

##### 2. Blind Man's Bluff

Classification: G-i; Te; Sta; Cumu (Purs, Vert).

This game was poorly described by the author of the included reference, and the inference was made that the game observed was



similar to the current Western European version. Therefore, it may be assumed that one person, blind-folded in some way, was made "it", and had to capture, and identify, one of the other players who then became the pursuer.

Location: Mota, Banks Island, Tanga.

Reference: F. Coombe. Island of Enchantment. Macmillan & Co. Ltd., London, 1911.

### 3. Boroma

Classification: G-i; Te; Com (Exp, Rhy); Cumu (Musc, Simu).

The children playing this game formed a circle by taking a firm grip of each other's wrists, and one player was selected to go into the center of the circle. The circle of players moved around the center boy chanting a simple, apparently meaningless tune. Meanwhile, the center player hopped around in a crouched position, and, at a signal from the circling players, attempted to break out of the circle by charging at various parts without using his hands. The author of the included reference suggested the game was a simulation of trapped animals trying to escape from a net.

Location: Hula and Nara, British New Guinea.

Reference: F. R. Barton. "Children's games in British New Guinea," J. A. I., XXXVIII, 1908, p. 276.

### 4. Bows and Arrows (Competitive)

Classification: G-i; Te; Reg; Cumu (Dext, Simu).

The bow and arrow was a most important part of the material culture of traditional Melanesia, and proficiency in its use was



virtually a pre-requisite for success within that culture. Therefore, it is not surprising that Melanesian males of all ages indulged in contests to determine who could shoot the straightest, and the greatest distance. It was surprising that such contests have been relatively neglected by ethnographers working in the region.

Of the available references, none described competitions involving distance, and only one gave an outline of the rules of a particular archery contest. Williams<sup>d</sup> described a contest where a number of boys stood in line armed with bows and arrows, and attempted to shoot a yam, or section of banana stalk, which was rolled in front of them. Others were content to say that "men sometimes had shooting matches with bows and arrows,"<sup>b</sup> or, "in competitions the one who hits a certain target scores a point for himself."<sup>a</sup>

Location: Wogeo, New Guinea, Kumngo, Central New Guinea; Torres Strait Islands; Fly River, New Guinea.

References: (a) H. Aufenanger. "Children's Games and Entertainments . . . , " Anthropos, LIII, 1948, p. 579.

(b) A. C. Haddon (ed). R. C. A. E. T., IV, p. 317.

(c) H. I. Hogbin. "A New Guinea Childhood from Weaning . . . , " Oceania, XVI, No. 4, 1946, p. 277.

(d) F. E. Williams, op. cit., p. 441.

## 5. Canoe Racing (Models)

Classification: G-i; Aq; Sta; Cumu (Stra, Dext, Simu).

Older men and boys living in coastal societies often amused themselves by making sailing models of their respective canoes, and in order to test these models, races were held by the younger children.





The references have not given a detailed description of the types of crafts made, or whether any rules existed for their racing, so it can be assumed that most contests were arranged on a challenge basis between crafts of variable size and sophistication.

Location: Wogeo, New Guinea; Torres Strait Islands; Manus, Admiralty Island.

References: (a) A. C. Haddon. op. cit., p. 318.  
 (b) H. I. Hogbin. op. cit., p. 277, 281.  
 (c) Margaret Mead. Growing Up in New Guinea. Mentor Books, New York, 1930, p. 18, 27, 117.

## 6. Canoe Races

Classification: G-i; Aq; Com (Pro, Rhy); Cumu (Stra, Dext, Musc, Card, Simu).

The canoe was a principal means of transportation in coastal societies, and in order to participate in the activities of such societies and to establish independence of movement from place to place, people had to become proficient in handling these crafts. It is not unusual therefore, that the older children had challenge-races in their canoes. Again, detail has been neglected in the ethnographical reports available.

Location: Southern New Guinea; Guadalcanal; Manus, Admiralty Island; Hall Sound; Aroma; Gaile.

References: (a) F. R. Barton. op. cit., p. 259.  
 (b) A. C. Haddon. op. cit., p. 318.  
 (c) H. I. Hogbin. op. cit., p. 277, 281.  
 (d) H. I. Hogbin. A Guadalcanal Society. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1965, p. 37.  
 (e) A. B. Lewis. People of the South Pacific. Chicago Natural Museum, 1951, p. 161.



## 7. Crossing the Bridge

Classification: G-i; Te; Pro; Dext.

A column was formed of pairs of children who faced each other and clasped wrists. Another child climbed up and walked along these joined hands gripping hairy heads to steady himself; as fast as he passed one pair, they raced round to join the other end of the column, all the time urging the 'walker' to go faster and faster till, at last, he made a miscalculation and fell through. The object of the game was to see who could cover the greatest distance.

Location: Moresby Straits.

Reference: D. Jenness and Rev. A. Ballantyne. The Northern D'Entrecasteaux. The Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1920, p. 175.

## 8. Dart Throwing

Classification: G-i; Te; Com (Exp, Rhy); Dext.

The dart thrown in this game was made of the hard 'dukun' wood and consisted of a thin hard rod with a swollen fusiform end, "something like a miniature dugong harpoon."<sup>a</sup> The game was played on a hard flat surface such as a sandy beach, and the natives threw the darts so they glanced off the hard flat surface and gained distance by means of a succession of bounds. The winner was decided by the dart which covered the greatest distance.

Location: Torres Straits Islands; Tanna, New Hebrides.

References: (a) A. C. Haddon. op. cit., p. 317.





(b) W. Watt. "Some Children's Games from Tanna, New Hebrides," Mankind, III, No. 9, 1946, p. 262.

9. Epi

Classification: G-i; Te; Com (Pro, Exp); Cumu (Purs, Stra, Dext).

The group of boys playing this game formed up in two opposing lines approximately twenty yards apart. A boy from each party singled himself out and one stood firm while the other ran at full speed straight at him. The boy standing firm did not move until the approaching boy was almost up to him. Then, with a clap of his hands, he made a quick sinuous leap to one side or the other. The charging boy attempted to anticipate this, because in order for him to score he had to kick the "sidestepper". Each boy had his turn, and the winner was the boy who could make the greatest number of contact kicks, and avoid, as often as possible, being kicked.

Location: Motu; Hulu (British New Guinea).

Reference: F. R. Barton. op. cit., p. 265.

10. Foot Races

Classification: G-i; Te; Pro; Musc.

Many writers referred to children running, but only one of those examined in this study mentioned "races". Aufenanger told of boys frequently racing against each other in central New Guinea. Frequent races were held over different routes terminating at the same point, and the winner usually teased the others because he "embiglim enim" (i.e., he was strong). Sometimes they agreed to walk, and not



run, but as soon as they were out of sight, it was not unusual for them to cheat by running.

Location: Kumngo, Central New Guinea.

Reference: H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 581.

# 11. Guessing Game

Classification: G-i; Te; Sta; Chan.

One variety of this game as played by the Kumngo tribe was described by Aufenanger<sup>a</sup> as follows:

Two groups of players sit facing each other. A member of one group holds a small stone between his fingers and slaps his fist into the opened hand of each member of the opposite group in turn, leaving the small stone in the hand of one of them. The fists are always clenched again as soon as the players have gone through their motions, so that no one can see whether the stone has been transferred or not. Now one member of the first group must guess in whose hand the stone has been hidden. If he guesses correctly he has won the round and gets the stone and if he fails the stone is replaced and he must guess again.

Two types of guessing game were described by Haddon as he observed them in the Torres Straits. One was very similar to the above; children held a number of small objects (e.g., shells) in their closed hands, and the "guesser" attempted to estimate the number of objects. The other is quite different, as it consisted of stating two syllables of a name from which the whole had to be guessed. The person guessing the correct name then gave the syllables for the following round.

Location: Kumngo, Central New Guinea; Mer; Torres Strait Islands.

References: (a) H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 577.



(b) A. C. Haddon. op. cit., p. 314.

## 12. Hide and Seek

Classification: G-i; Te; Com (Pro, Reg); Cumu (Purs, Simu).

Many ethnographers referred to, and described, various forms of the age-old game of hide and seek. All those cited in the included references alluded to the qualities of simulation, or imitation. It does not appear that merely searching for one's hidden play-mates was sufficient motivation for the game, and usually the "hiders" pretended to be animals,<sup>b</sup> or people escaping from some supernatural spirits.<sup>e</sup> Bartan<sup>b</sup> referred to a chase upon discovery (as known in the European form of hide and seek) in his description of the game as it was played by the Motu tribe of British New Guinea:

All but the prone boy run away and hide in different places. He, after a while, arises, and his object is to find the hiding boys. Any one of these having been discovered, he is hotly pursued and makes a dash for a base which has been previously selected, and his object is to gain this base without being captured by his pursuer.

In all cases observed, the seeker laid face down on the ground and covered his eyes while the remainder of the group hid. In the game described by Bell<sup>c</sup> "the seeker lies prone on the ground whilst one of the others sits astride his back," and, when all have hidden, they made bird calls to indicate they were ready. The seeker, using these calls for assistance, then attempted to find his colleagues.

Locations: Moresby Straits; New Guinea; Guadalcanal; Kumngo, Central New Guinea; Motu, Wanigela, Nara, British New Guinea; Tanga.





- References: (a) H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 576.  
 (b) F. R. Barton. op. cit., p. 267-268.  
 (c) F. L. S. Bell. op. cit., p. 57.  
 (d) H. I. Hogbin. Guadalcanal Society, op. cit.,  
 p. 37.  
 (e) D. Jenness and Rev. A. Ballantyne. op. cit.,  
 p. 171.  
 (f) A. B. Lewis. op. cit., p. 163-164.

### 13. Hopping Games

Classification: G-i; Te; Com (Pro, Rhy); Cumu (Purs, Dext, Vert).

A variety of hopping games were recorded in traditional Melanesia, and the following have been selected as examples of the more common types. Jenness and Ballantyne<sup>b</sup> described a competition where children "squat in a row on their heels, with their hands resting on the ground, and hop forward in that position." This was apparently a race, as each tried to "hop faster and outstrip the rest."

Another variety described by Aufenanger<sup>a</sup> was an endurance test, as the participants were required to "raise one foot and hold it with one hand," and the person who could hold on the longest was the winner. For this game "one of the children is appointed as a watcher."

A more complicated game was described by Watt<sup>c</sup> as follows:

A large number of pieces of reed are distributed among the players, who, all except one, sit in a circle. The one excepted is outside. All in the circle hold up a piece of reed each, over their heads, and sing. The one outside has to hop around the circle and gather the reeds on the way. As each reed is taken another is held up in its place. The hopper goes round and round till exhausted, when he gives in. Another one becomes hopper and a new circle is formed. Each hopper strives to gather the greatest number of reeds.

Location: Moresby Straits; Kumngo, Central New Guinea;



Tanna, New Hebrides.

- References: (a) H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 577.  
 (b) D. Jenness and Rev. A. Ballantyne. op. cit., p. 174.  
 (c) W. Watt. op. cit., p. 263.

#### 14. Hopscotch

Classification: G-i; Te; Com (Pro, Rhy, Reg); Dext.

Hopscotch could really be included under Hopping Games (No. 13), but as the game is quite sophisticated and similar to that still played in western Europe, a separate classification has been made. Unfortunately Hogbin did not describe the game extensively, and was content to note that it was almost identical to our known game insomuch as the participant had to propel a small flat stone into various marked squares while hopping on one foot.

Location: Guadalcanal.

Reference: H. I. Hogbin. A Guadalcanal Society, op. cit., p. 32.

#### 15. Hunting Games (Looking for hidden objects)

Classification: G-i; Te; Sta; Cumu (Purs, Enig).

Haddon<sup>b</sup> described a searching game where a group of adults arranged themselves by kneeling in a circle on sand or bare earth. One person was blindfolded and his head placed close to a prepared spot on the ground. One of the others then picked a louse from his head which was subsequently hidden in the sand. All players then sang and beat the ground with their hands while the person from whose head the louse was taken, searched for it. If unsuccessful, then





someone else attempted the search, and so on, until the louse was found; it was then eaten by the successful searcher.

Bell<sup>a</sup> gave an account of a searching game played in Tanga; members of a bush party used a small fishbone fern to keep tally of the number of previously selected objects observed on a trip. For example, small green lizards may be selected, and when seen by a member of the party he took a leaf off his fern. At the end of the journey the person having the barest fern was the winner.

Another variety of the game described by Haddon was the children's game of hiding various small articles, such as shells, or even the lens of a fish-eye, in the sand and then searching for it. Naturally, the one who found the hidden object was the winner, and as a reward this person had the privilege of hiding the object for the next round.

Location: Southern New Guinea; Torres Strait; Tanga.

References: (a) F. L. S. Bell. *op. cit.*, p. 85.  
 (b) A. C. Haddon. *op. cit.*, p. 313-314.  
 (c) A. B. Lewis. *op. cit.*, p. 166.

## 16. Joint Cracking

Classification: G-i; Te; Com (Rhy, Reg); Simu.

Bell<sup>a</sup> described a joint-cracking game in which young children squatted in a circle with their legs doubled underneath them in an unnatural position. One of the players had a small shell in his closed fist which represented a herb used by the old men of the tribe to relieve aching joints. After rubbing their thighs to the accompaniment



of a simple song, the players bent backwards until their heads touched at the center of the circle. The shell was then passed on to the right, and the song, plus the rubbing, was repeated until all have had a turn. When the shell is returned to the original player he called out the name of an old man, and hit first one knee, and then the other. This is also repeated around the circle and each player called a different name. Then, in turn, each player rose and extended his arms and legs with a jerk in an attempt to make them "crack". The "crackers" were thus separated from the "non-crackers", and the game was concluded by an imitation of an old men's ceremony of swapping areca nuts and lime. This took place amid much hilarity.

Coombe<sup>b</sup> referred to joint-cracking as a means of selecting "sides" for other activities. The players sat in a circle with their legs doubled underneath them, and, on rising, if their legs cracked they were "flying foxes" and went on the inland side; if not, they were "hermit crabs" and went on the seaward side. Once the sides were chosen mock battles were fought between them.

Location: Mota, Banks Island; Tanga.

References: (a) F. L. S. Bell. op. cit., p. 59-60.  
(b) F. Coombe. op. cit., p. 84.

#### 17. Karara (The Parrot)

Classification: G-i; Te; Com (Exp, Rhy); Cumu (Dext, Simu).

Williams described this game as follows:

Boys sit in a circle with one standing in the middle. He holds a ball of tightly bound banana leaves. Another boy dances around



the circle singing 'Karara, karara', seizes one of the seated boys and tumbles him on his back. As he does so the boy in the middle aims his ball at him.

Williams suggested that the game represented shooting parrots which came to destroy bananas. Unfortunately he did not tell what happened after the ball had been "aimed".

Location: Trans-Fly, New Guinea.

Reference: F. E. Williams. op. cit., p. 444.

#### 18. Kwaito Pino Pino

Classification: G-i; Te; Com (Pro, Rhy); Cumu (Dext, Vert).

A number of children formed a circle facing inwards by holding each other's hands. The "top" of the circle then moved through the center, and passed under the raised hands of those forming the "bottom" of the circle, and all followed to the accompaniment of a song, until the whole circle was reversed and all the players were facing outwards. Once this was achieved they began running around at increasing speed until the circle was broken and someone was sent flying off at a tangent. This player was eliminated, and the game proceeded, until only one remained as the ultimate winner.

Location: Hula, British New Guinea.

Reference: F. R. Barton. op. cit., p. 275.

#### 19. Land-Diving

Classification: G-i; Ae; Pro; Vert.

This most unusual game was described very fully in the included reference. The natives of Malekula in the New Hebrides





constructed a large tower approximately eighty feet high by using a large tree, stripped of unwanted branches, for a base. Vines were carefully measured, and attached to the tower at various heights; the ground below the tower was cleared of rocks and debris, and pulverized as one might for a seed-bed. The vines were shredded at the ends so they could be tied to the participant's ankles.

The players, taking turns, fastened the vines to their ankles, climbed the tower, and dived headfirst into the prepared pit. The person making the highest dive was heralded as the winner, and accorded much praise and admiration by the onlookers; this was a most appealing spectator sport. The record height was supposedly in excess of eighty feet, and contestants were usually the young men of the tribe.

Location: Maleka Island, New Hebrides.

Reference: Irving and Electa Johnson. "South Seas Incredible Land Divers," National Geographic Magazine, CVII, 1955, p. 77-92.

## 20. Magic Wand

Classification: G-i; Te; Sta; Simu.

The magic wand is a rod which was rubbed with "smelling plants and decorated with rings and rattling bean-pods." The game was usually played on moonlight evenings and the participants sat facing each other in two lines and sang a chant about taking the wand. In order to get the wand, a player had to amuse the group and make them laugh. This they did by pulling faces, twisting their bodies, or distorting their voices. If successful in raising a laugh, the person



took the wand, and it was someone else's turn to amuse the assembled company.

Location: Mota, Banks Island.

Reference: F. Coombe. op. cit., p. 366-367.

## 21. Napuei

Classification: G-i; Te; Pro; Cumu (Purs, Simu).

There were many forms of this game played in Melanesia, but the following descriptions give some indication of how two forms of a circular pursuit activity were played.

The participants, all except one, formed a circle by holding hands; the excepted one in the middle was called a "thief". This person went around the inside of the circle, which was supposed to be a fence, and chanted that he was working his taro plot. This was repeated, and each time around the center man named a different plant, and touched a different part of the circled player's body as he passed. Finally he returned to the center of the circle, and a repartee concerning sacred coconuts took place, at the end of which, the "thief" broke out of the circle; all players scattered and the center man attempted to catch one of them to take his place as the "thief".<sup>b</sup>

The other variety of this game was reported by Bell<sup>a</sup> who noted that a number of men and women joined hands and danced around a selected center player who was crouched in the middle of the circle. The center player simulated the growth and ripening of a "la:pi", which the rest of the group were singing about. When the center player was





finally standing, one of the circling players called out, "all are eating pig at Lufunkamo" (some neighbouring hamlet), and the center person then tried to break out of the circle in the direction of the named hamlet. If successful all chased him, and, if caught, he was returned to the circle, and the game restarted. If unsuccessful, then another hamlet was called and he tried again. If, however, he succeeded in getting away, then the person deemed the most responsible for his escape was placed in the center.

Location: Tanna, New Hebrides; Tanga.

References: (a) F. L. S. Bell. op. cit., p. 58.  
(b) W. Watt. op. cit., p. 263-264.

## 22. Oven-Game

Classification: G-i; Com (Pro, Exp, Rhy); Cumu (Purs, Dext, Simu).

The children playing this game traced circles on the ground big enough for three or four players to stand in, and no ring was close to any other. The rings were called "ovens", and a small round shell was thrown from one oven to another. If it fell face down, there was a rush of all players towards that particular oven, and the owner tried to touch the incoming players before they could obtain safety. If the fugitives could as much as get hold of one of the players in the safety circle it was sufficient to give them safety. If all gained safety, or after those missing out had withdrawn from the game, the shell was tossed again. If the shell landed on its back there was no rush.

Location: Mota, Banks Island.



Reference: F. Coombe. op. cit., p. 83-84.

### 23. Pig Hunt

Classification: G-i; Te; Pro; Cumu (Purs, Simu).

One boy hid in a patch of grass, or shrubbery, and the remainder took their "spears" and went in search of the "wild pig". When they approached his hiding place, he jumped out and charged them while imitating the angry grunts of a pig. The hunters threw down their spears and fled. This continued until the "pig" became exhausted, whereupon he was captured and carried back to the communal fireplace.

Location: Kumngo, Central New Guinea.

Reference: H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 580.

### 24. Sand Jumping

Classification: G-i; Te; Com (Pro, Exp); Cumu (Dext, Musc).

This game was played by the younger men who constructed a pile of sand some three feet high. One boy was delegated to watch the mound, and the others went back some "twelve yards" and used a running jump to try and leap over the pile. If the surface was disturbed, the defaulter had to take over as watcher until somebody else missed his jump. The height of the sand pile was predetermined by the ability of the group, and apparently there was no effort made to get a single winner by continually raising the height.

Location: Tanga, New Hebrides.

Reference: F. L. S. Bell. op. cit., p. 85.



25. Skittles

Classification: G-i; Te; Com (Exp, Rhy); Dext.

Mention was made of a game of skittles played in Melanesia, but little was available concerning specific rules. Lewis<sup>b</sup> described the game as follows:

. . . The young men playing a game with round nuts which were rolled over a regular course on the earthen floor (of a clubhouse) so as to strike other nuts. The game suggested ninepins, though the rules were very different.

Unfortunately his description of the game concluded at this point.

Hogbin<sup>a</sup> described an outdoor game of skittles where participants set up a number of large shells, and, using coconuts and a rolling action, attempted to knock them over.

Location: Solomon Islands; Guadalcanal.

References: (a) H. I. Hogbin. A Guadalcanal Society, op. cit., p. 37.

(b) A. B. Lewis. op. cit., p. 162.

26. Slinging

Classification: G-i; Te; Com (Exp, Rhy); Cumu (Purs, Dext, Simu).

The sling as described by Bunkerah<sup>b</sup> was principally made from bark fibre of young "banian" roots. Being an open sling, the people observed in New Caledonia by the above author, wound it around their large mop of hair.

Aufenanger<sup>a</sup> described a different sling-shot made by fastening a fibre rope to a flexible stick.

They fashion a loop at the end of the rope and place a small stone





in it, holding it with their right hand. By tightening the string and suddenly releasing it . . . they project the stone into the air or at some target.

Jenness and Ballantyne<sup>c</sup> referred to sling contests which develop into battles, and could really be called team games. For personal targets the slingers used "'bwaibu', a fruit rather like a small crabapple, and quite as hard."

Bunkerah<sup>b</sup> illustrated the Melanesian's skill with the sling when he told of pigeons being killed with river stones at distances of over eighty yards, and how some man, "in five throws at flying fruit-bats, at ranges of up to sixty yards, knocked down three."

The competitions for slinging appeared to have been informal, and consisted of shooting at pre-arranged targets (living or dead) on something of a challenge basis.

Location: Moresby Straits; Central New Guinea; New Caledonia.

References: (a) H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 583.

(b) T. Bunkerah. "The Sling in New Caledonia," Mankind, I, 1934, p. 190.

(c) D. Jenness and Rev. A. Ballantyne. op. cit., p. 79.

## 27. Spear Throwing

Classification: G-i; Te; Com (Exp, Rhy); Cumu (Purs, Dext, Simu).

Proficiency in the use of the spear was essential for the young Melanesian male, and, therefore, much of his leisure time was spent in practising spear throwing and in competitions designed to increase his skill. The spears used in competitions were usually only pointed



reeds or sticks, and much of the sport was arranged on a challenge basis; targets were selected, and members of the group strived to be either the first to hit the target, or hit it with the greatest amount of consistency. Of the included references only Haddon<sup>c</sup> described a spear throwing competition where the objective was distance rather than accuracy.

In a popular form of competition the participants lined-up, preferably on a slight slope, and a rolling target such as a cut log, or piece of banana stalk, was rolled in front of them. As the target drew level with each man he attempted to spear it, and success usually meant moving to the rear of the line.

Locations: Moresby Straits; Dobu; Wogeo, New Guinea; Kumngo, Central New Guinea; Manus; Admiralty Islands; Torres Strait Islands; Tanga; New Hebrides.

- References: (a) H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 579.  
 (b) F. L. S. Bell. op. cit., p. 83-84.  
 (c) A. C. Haddon. op. cit., p. 317.  
 (d) H. I. Hogbin. "A New Guinea Childhood . . .", op. cit., p. 277.  
 (e) D. Jenness and Rev. A. Ballantyne. op. cit., p. 79-80.  
 (f) M. Mead. Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies. Mentor Books, New York, 1935, p. 35.

## 28. Stick Fighting

Classification: G-i; Te; Com (Exp, Rhy); Cumu (Stra, Dext, Musc, Simu).

From the description supplied, it seemed doubtful if this was a play activity, or a means of settling individual differences. However, Aufenanger suggested the activity was very similar to "quarter staffing",





even though, from his observations, the "game did not appear to have any rules at all."

Location: Kumngo, Central New Guinea.

Reference: H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 579.

## 29. Stone Throwing

Classification: G-i; Te; Com (Exp, Rhy); Dext.

Competitive throwing of stones has been an age-old favorite with boys of all races, colours, and creeds, and the traditional Melanesians were no exception. Aufenanger<sup>a</sup> pointed out that the "children enjoyed throwing stones at any sort of a target, even when they are tired of other games." Sometimes, but only rarely, stones were thrown aimlessly, and usually special targets were selected, and competitions held.

Watt<sup>b</sup> also observed the ever popular game of skipping stones across the water.

A stone is thrown so as to glide along the top of the water, and the victor is the one who strikes the water most frequently.

Location: Kumngo, Central New Guinea; Tanna; New Hebrides.

References: (a) H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 581.

(b) W. Watt. op. cit., p. 262.

## 30. Tag

Classification: G-i; Te; Pro; Cumu (Purs, Stra).

One might assume that a great number of tag games would have been played by the Melanesians, but the available references do not support such a theory. However, the activity may have been



neglected because of the common-place nature of such games.

Watt described three types of Tag observed in the New Hebrides as follows:

"Kwanapit": any number could play and all were out except one, or perhaps two, "and those out try to catch those in, without being touched in return."

"Kwanapit harre": was similar to the above, and most like the common game of "tiggy" where one person is "it"; the person "it" tried to touch another who then became "it", and so on, until the players became exhausted, or bored, with the game.

The third type of tag described by Watt is a little more complicated as two of the group of participators occupied a central spot called a "house". The others each had "houses" of their own, but endeavoured to get to the central house without being touched. If successful, the original occupiers of the central house were defeated and the game started over.

Location: Throughout the entire New Hebrides.

Reference: W. Watt. op. cit., p. 262.

### 31. Tickling

Classification: G-i; Te; Reg; Cumu (Purs, Stra).

This was a very simple game but apparently quite popular in central New Guinea. The game was one of "trickery", as the objective was to sneak up on some unsuspecting person, and "seize them by the waist" (i. e., "dig in the ribs"). A second variety was played by



tickling the soles of drowsy or preoccupied playmates. The game apparently enjoyed successes closely akin to those of similar games played currently in the western world.

Location: Central New Guinea.

Reference: H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 578.

### 32. Toka Pul

Classification: G-i; Te; Com (Pro, Reg); Cumu (Dext, Vert).

This game as described by Bell, was very similar to 'Crossing the Bridge' (Game No. 7) as can be seen by the following description:

The players form two lines facing each other. One player grasps the opposite player's wrists . . . forming a laneway of human chairs. The odd player then mounts the end chair and attempts to run along the lane of outstretched hands. The linked couples move their arms and do all they can to make the runner fall to the ground. It is a most exciting game, and calls for much athletic prowess on the part of the odd player.

Location: Tanga, New Hebrides.

Reference: F. L. S. Bell. op. cit., p. 57.

### 33. Tops

Classification: G-i; Te; Com (Exp, Rhy, Reg); Dext.

Spinning tops were apparently a favorite toy in traditional Melanesia and a great variety of tops were used. Although tops are principally used for 'pastimes' today, the Melanesians were much more serious about their top-spinning, and usually competitions were held for the "loudest singer" or "longest spinner".

C. H. Read<sup>f</sup> reported some interesting observations of





stone-spinning tops collected in the Torres Straits made from "buff-grey sandstone." He also mentioned a humming top made of a section of bamboo, and a top designed for use with a very heavy "string".

Haddon<sup>c</sup> described lighter types of tops made from beans or shells which "are spun with the fingers", or "by repeated slow, steady, sliding movements of the outstretched palms and fingers" in the case of heavier or larger tops.

In some of the contests held, tops were timed by Haddon to spin for more than twenty seven minutes.

Location: Solomon Islands; Kumngo, Central New Guinea; Manus; Admiralty Islands; Torres Strait Islands; New Ireland; Tanga.

- References: (a) H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 582.  
 (b) F. L. S. Bell. op. cit., p. 56.  
 (c) A. C. Haddon. op. cit., p. 314-317.  
 (d) A. B. Lewis. op. cit., p. 164-165.  
 (e) M. Mead. Growing Up in New Guinea, op. cit., p. 19, 75.  
 (f) C. H. Read. "Stone Spinning Tops from Torres Straits, New Guinea," J. A. I., XVII, 1888, p. 85-90.

#### 34. Uduve-Uduve

Classification: G-i; Te; Rhy; Simu.

The players lined up one behind another, and caught hold of some piece of clothing of the person in front. They then advanced slowly "with mincing steps and serpentine course, crouching," towards, and under, the arch formed by two boys joining their upraised arms. While the group was advancing, a song was sung concerning the trapping of small animals and birds in the hill-lands; at the conclusion of



the song the arch fell and one of the players was trapped. This person was out, and so the game continued until only one was left.

Location: Nara, British New Guinea.

Reference: F. R. Barton. op. cit., p. 276-277.

### 35. Walking Game

Classification: G-i; Te; Pro; Cumu (Chan, Vert).

Two varieties of walking games were described by Aufenanger; a walking backwards race (which is self-explanatory), and "walking with eyes shut." In the latter game boys and girls tried to walk towards a certain object, or along a particular path, with their eyes closed. The rules were rarely observed strictly, and participants opened their eyes to see if they were going in the right direction, and "show-off by stretching out their arms and making strange movements with their arms and body."

Location: Central New Guinea.

Reference: H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 577-578.

### 36. Water Fights

Classification: G-i; Aq; Com (Exp, Reg); Cumu (Purs, Stra, Dext).

There must be many varieties of the "sloshing" type of water-fight, and Aufenanger described a favorite contest held in central New Guinea. After heavy tropical deluges, participants established themselves in a large "mud-puddle", and then splashed each other furiously with their feet. The object was to force some member of the group to





withdraw, and such a game was truly "individual", as it was every player for himself--withdraw, and you withdraw alone.

Location: Central New Guinea.

Reference: H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 579.

### 37. Wrestling

Classification: G-i; Te; Exp; Cumu (Stra, Dext, Musc, Card).

Boys invariably wrestled with each other and, although a number of writers referred to the "rough and tumble games" of the Melanesians, very little was written about organized wrestling. The two references cited below referred to wrestling being a popular sport with the young men of the respective areas, but did not describe a 'bout', or give any indication of the styles used, or rules observed. However, such mention was sufficient to include wrestling as one of the individual games played in traditional Melanesia.

Location: Wogeo, New Guinea; Manus, Admiralty Islands.

References: (a) H. I. Hogbin. "A New Guinea Childhood . . . , " op. cit., p. 275, 277.

(b) M. Mead. Sex and Temperament . . . , op. cit., p. 78.

## B. TEAM GAMES

### 1. Batting the Ball

Classification: G-t; Te; Com (Exp, Rhy); Dext.

There are two teams. A boy from one team throws the very hard fruit of the 'kau'i kants' tree towards the boys of the opposing team. These try to hit the 'ball' with a piece of wood. If the first boy misses it, the second tries, then the third etc. If all



miss it, the 'ball' must be picked up and thrown (not hit) back to the other team. The other boys, in their turn, try to bat it back. The game may go on for hours.

Location: Central New Guinea.

Reference: H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 581.

## 2. Bat Hunt

Classification: G-t; Te; Com (Pro, Reg); Cumu (Purs, Simu).

The group of participants broke into two teams; one group were the hunters, and the other, the bats. Two of the hunters held their hands together in such a way as to make a "bat-trap", and the "bats" fly around the trap and try to get through every so often, without being caught. As the bats were caught, the trappers went through the motions of cutting them up, and distributing the parts for food. When all the bats had been caught, and were being dissected, one leaped up and shouted, "Who is going to eat my head?" All the bats then rose and chased their captors off into the bush.

Location: Kumngo, Central New Guinea.

Reference: H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 580.

## 3. Dubu-Dubu

Classification: G-t; Te; Com (Pro, Exp); Cumu (Purs, Stra).

A row of boys faced a row of girls about fifteen yards apart and separated by a mound of sand called a 'dubu'. Some boy, or girl, advanced and dared the opposite side to capture him or her. The challenge was immediately taken by one, or a number, of the opposition, and the challenger tried to avoid capture and return safely to his



colleagues. The opposition did not dare venture too near lest they be caught; but eventually somebody is grabbed and "a tugging match ensues, in which, perhaps, there may be half-a-dozen boys pulling at a girl's legs in one direction, and a half-a-dozen girls pulling at her head and arms in the opposite direction."

When a capture was made, he or she was placed behind the victor's mound, and scorned vocally by the victorious party. The game then continued and the object was for one party to capture all the members of the other.

Location: British New Guinea.

Reference: F. R. Barton. op. cit., p. 272-273.

#### 4. Football

Classification: G-t; Te; Com (Pro, Exp, Rhy); Cumu (Stra, Dext, Musc, Card).

Apparently a form of soccer was played by Melanesians using a "native orange, breadfruit, or coconut"<sup>c</sup> for a ball, or, in some instances, the very hard 'konts' fruit.<sup>a</sup> Goals varied from sticks stuck in the ground, to two fences; rules were non-existent, except the ball had to be kicked, and not thrown or picked up and carried. According to Aufenanger, the competition was extremely keen, and the lack of rules did not prevent the extremely cautious counting of the goals. There was no evidence of fixed numbers of players making up a team, but it could be assumed that the numbers were kept relatively even.





Location: Aoba, New Hebrides; Wogeo, New Guinea; Central New Guinea; Manus; Admiralty Islands.

References: (a) H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 581.

(b) H. I. Hogbin. "A New Guinea Childhood . . . , " op. cit., p. 275, 277.

(c) A. B. Lewis. op. cit., p. 164.

(d) M. Mead. Growing Up in New Guinea. op. cit., p. 78.

## 5. Footfighting

Classification: G-t; Te; Exp; Cumu (Stra, Dext, Musc).

This is a very rough game. Two opposing groups of boys kick one another, each side trying to make their opponents fall down. Sometimes several members of one side concentrate on one member of the opposite party, in which case his mates will rush to the rescue. Tears often flow, but nobody wants to miss the excitement of the game.

Location: Kumngo, Central New Guinea.

Reference: H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 579.

## 6. Handball

Classification: G-t; Te; Com (Rhy, Reg); Dext.

The competitive form of handball dealt with in this section of the study, was played by two teams of approximately equal numbers. The most popular ball used was the bladder of a pig, but varying types from "the thick, oval deep red fruit of the 'kai' tree" to "cubical balls made of pandanus or coconut palm leaves" were used for handball. Although there must have been a great number of minor variations of the game, the following description provided by Bell<sup>a</sup> gives a reasonably good account of the game.

The ball is handed to a member of one of the two opposing teams.



He punches it into the air and tries to keep it in motion as long as he can. If it falls to the ground before the tenth hit, he has to hand it over to a member of the opposing team . . . Whilst the player is juggling the greasy ball his team mates cluster around him. At the same time members of the opposing team bump into him and do everything they can to make him miss.

Location: New Guinea; Torres Straits Islands; Matu; Tanga; New Hebrides.

References: (a) F. R. Barton. op. cit., p. 264-265.  
 (b) F. L. S. Bell. op. cit., p. 83-84.  
 (c) A. C. Haddon. op. cit., p. 313.  
 (d) A. B. Lewis. op. cit., p. 164.

## 7. Hockey

Classification: G-t; Te; Com (Pro, Exp, Rhy); Cumu (Stra, Dext).

A type of "shinty", very closely resembling modern field hockey, was apparently played in traditional Melanesia. Haddon<sup>a</sup> reported that the game, for which he gave a very good description, enjoyed extreme popularity throughout all the areas he visited. The ball was made of wood, varying from three and a half to four ounces in weight, and was struck with a roughly made stick "which is usually a piece of bamboo varying from sixty to eighty five centimetres in length, on which a grip is cut." The beach provided an excellent playing surface, and the contest was extremely fast with "intense excitement and tremendous noise." There do not appear to have been any goals, nor very many rules, and the object of the game seems to have been to keep possession of the ball.

Location: Torres Straits Islands; Fly River, New Guinea; New Hebrides.





- References: (a) A. C. Haddon. op. cit., p. 312.  
 (b) A. B. Lewis. op. cit., p. 164.  
 (c) F. E. Williams. op. cit., p. 441-442.

## 8. Hunting Game

Classification: G-t; Te; Com (Pro, Exp, Rhy); Cumu (Purs, Stra, Dext).

The unusual practice of playing 'nakwane manu' borders very closely on an economic activity rather than a play activity, as it was contested mainly as an "incentive to seek for food." Two sides were chosen and each tried to outdo the other in the quantity, quality, and variety of fishes, birds, and animals successfully hunted during an established period of time.

One party went out on the first day of the contest, hunted all day, and turned over the results of their hunt to the other team that night. The challenge was thereby issued, and team two attempted to outdo team one, which rested on the following day. The game may have gone on for weeks, and "no day may be omitted." Presumably the team which gave up first, was the loser.

Location: Tanna, New Hebrides.

Reference: W. Watt. op. cit., p. 262.

## 9. Iwalobe

Classification: G-t; Te; Exp; Cumu (Purs, Stra, Musc).

An 'iwalobe' was a long stick from which rings of bark were removed, the stick charred, and remaining bark removed so that it was decorated with light and dark bands. The game was usually played



on moonlight evenings on the beach, or in a protected glade close by the village. The teams had no set numbers as the contest was conducted boys against girls. In preparation for the game the girls sat around and sang while the boys "paint their faces and otherwise deck themselves out for the grand occasion."

Once prepared, the boys stood up and held their 'iwalobes' high above their heads. This was a challenge for the girls to come and get the sticks and break them. Often a furious struggle resulted with a number of boys striving to keep the stick aloft, while numerous girls leaped and clawed at it in an attempt to get one end on the ground so that it could be broken with their united weights.

Football is a harmless game compared with this. Sometimes a boy or girl is hurt and runs aside to cry, but the struggle still goes on until either the stick is broken or the girls leave off in despair.

Location: Papua; Moresby Straits.

Reference: D. Jenness and Rev. A. Ballantyne. op. cit., p. 180-181.

#### 10. Kolap

Classification: G-t; Te; Com (Rhy, Reg); Dext.

Two mats were placed on the ground about fifteen yards apart, and two men sat behind each mat; "those facing each other obliquely being partners." Each player had four "kolap" beans which he tried to throw onto the further mat. Each bean landing and staying on the mat constituted a point, and the first pair to accumulate twenty points was the winner.



Haddon also referred to a similar game in which "kolap" beans were throwing at a mark on the ground, but did not furnish details of this particular activity.

Location: Miriam society, Torres Strait.

Reference: A. C. Haddon. op. cit., p. 313.

#### 11. Lavala

Classification: G-t; Aq; Com (Pro, Exp, Rhy); Cumu (Purs, Musc, Simu).

A number of boys and girls joined hands to form a long line.

The two at the end of the line then move forward and inwards and pass under the uplifted arms of numbers 3 and 4. They continue circling in the same direction and thus the end of the chain comes round to the front of the line again and the leading child, followed by the next in the row, passes under the arched arms of numbers 4 and 5. The original row of children gradually becomes a chain circling inwards upon itself, until the whole row of children is involved. Whilst this movement is in progress they all sing . . . until the last eye in the row has been threaded.

By this time the row of children had become a bunched mass, and four pre-selected participants disengaged themselves, and, at the end of the song, they attempted to rush the group and rock it back and forth so that it collapsed and players were "submerged in the sea amidst much splashing and spluttering and screams of laughter." If successful or not, four more "pushers" were chosen, and the game started again.

Location: Motu; Nara; Aroma; Mailu; Wanigela; Kerema (Papuan Gulf).

Reference: F. R. Barton. op. cit., p. 268-271.





## 12. Mock Battles

Classification: G-t; Te; Com (Pro, Exp); Cumu (Purs, Stra, Simu).

From the included references, it appears that most mock battles were fought with "reed-spears",<sup>c</sup> or "blunted arrows"<sup>a</sup> and these games were very closely akin to our modern games of "cowboys and indians", or "cops and robbers". Two sides were formed, weapons and battleground chosen, and, sometimes after appropriate body decoration, the battle began. The first team forced to withdraw and flee to the bush was declared the loser. It is conceivable that fruits, and not too harmful miscellaneous objects, were also used in such battles, but injuries were not uncommon.

Location: Wogeo; New Guinea; Torres Strait Islands; Tanna; New Hebrides.

References: (a) A. C. Haddon. op. cit., p. 317.

(b) H. I. Hogbin. op. cit., p. 277.

(c) W. Watt. op. cit., p. 262.

## 13. Nettle Fighting

Classification: G-t; Te; Exp; Dext.

This game is very closely related to number 12, as children, and adults on occasions, formed opposing sides and bombarded each other with stinging nettles called "nonts".

Since the natives were relatively naked, the game called for a good deal of "courage and endurance," and the large blisters on their bodies after such an encounter told a "vivid story." The 'nonts' nettles were considered "good medicine for all ailments," so the inflicted



suffering was not seriously regarded by the unfortunate participants.

Location: Kumngo, Central New Guinea.

Reference: H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 579.

14. Numai Ning

Classification: G-t; Te; Pro; Cumu (Purs, Stra).

Two teams were selected and each team had a "home" which was a large pole placed in the ground. The poles "are a considerable distance apart" and each team selected two guards to protect their home post. The remainder of the team tried to draw the opposing guards away from their posts, so one or more of them may get to this post without being touched. If they succeeded, a piece of reed was placed at the bottom of the post to signify a victory. If a player was touched after a victory had been made, the whole of his team gathered around their post and one secretly pulled up a reed previously put in. The other side could redeem their losses by successfully guessing who pulled up the reed.

Location: Tanna, New Hebrides.

Reference: W. Watt. op. cit., p. 263.

15. Sodan

Classification: G-t; Te; Com (Exp, Rhy, Reg); Dext.

This was a spear throwing team game contested by the adult males who formed opposing teams of ten players each. Two bamboo stakes, about one and a half inches in diameter and seven feet high, were stuck in the ground approximately six yards apart. The teams





took up a position, and armed themselves with a small hardwood spear. The object of the game was to hurl this spear through the opposition's bamboo stake. First, all the competitors from one team threw, and then moved away to let the opposition throw; this concluded the first round. At this point a tally was made of the number of spears in each stake, and the team with the least number of strikes withdrew their spears, and the second round commenced. The team with the most strikes left their spears in the target, and the object of the game was to have all spears sticking in the opposition's bamboo stake.

Another variety of this game was played where both teams shot at the same target, and from the same spot. In this variety of the game, players shot alternately (that is, one from team X followed by one from team Y, etc.), and again the object was to have all the spears from one team sticking in the bamboo stake. Players not only attempted to stick their own spears in the target, but also tried to knock out opposing spears, which, if they were successful, returned to the game and had to be thrown again.

Location: Tanga.

Reference: F. L. S. Bell. op. cit., p. 83.

#### 16. Tug-o-War

Classification: G-t; Te; Com (Exp, Reg); Musc.

From the available references a number of varieties of "tug-o-war" games were noted. Bell<sup>a</sup> described a simple form where two teams of men, equal in number, joined hands, and, on a signal from



the 'referee', the leaders of opposing teams grasped hands and each team tried to pull the other into their "home territory".

A sitting tug-o-war observed in the New Hebrides was described by Watt<sup>c</sup> as follows:

Two sides are formed and sit near each other. Each side endeavours by fair means, or foul, to snatch one or more from the opposing side. Each side tries to retain its own, and so the snatched one is dragged back and forward till either rescued or taken captive.

A simple form of tug-o-war, similar to that described by Bell, was observed in Papua. Participants locked their arms around each other's waists, and pulled in a method similar to the English game of "oranges and lemons".

Jenness and Ballantyne<sup>b</sup> described a circular form of this game where an even number of children (approximately six or eight) formed a circle, turned it inside out, and, on a given signal, pulled three against three, or four against four. This variety was known as 'wadomoni', which literally means, "back to back".

Location: Papua; Moresby Straits; Tanna; New Hebrides; Tanga.

References: (a) F. L. S. Bell. op. cit., p. 84.  
 (b) D. Jenness and Rev. A. Ballantyne. op. cit., p. 172-173.  
 (c) W. Watt. op. cit., p. 263.

## 17. Upamaino

Classification: G-t; Te; Com (Pro, Exp); Cumu (Purs, Stra, Musc).

This is a boy versus girl team game, and was played on the



sandy beaches by the children of the Motu and Aroma tribes. The girls selected a good sandy spot and buried some coconuts under large mounds of sand. The girls then armed themselves with small branches covered with vicious "green-ants" and defended the pile. The boys attempted to drag the girls away from the mound and dig out the hidden coconuts; if successful, they were the winners.

This game is almost too rough a one to watch with pleasure, for the boys emerge covered with bruises and abrasions. But it is played with the greatest good humour and evident enjoyment.

Location: Motu and Aroma, British New Guinea.

Reference: F. R. Barton. op. cit., p. 271-272.

## C. INDIVIDUAL PASTIMES

Many of the individual pastimes included in this section of the paper were probably practised in group situations, but, if in the opinion of the author, the activities were capable of affording pleasure to isolated individuals, they were included. Also, competitions may have been held in these activities, but the reports used infer that the included play activities were conducted solely for their own sake, and not, in most cases, with a view to determining 'winners' and/or 'losers'.

### 1. Bean Throwing

Classification: P-i; Te; Rhy; Dext.

A large flat bean, called a 'bandibandi', about four inches in length, was thrown by means of a long piece of grass which was wound around it; the loose end was twisted around the thrower's forefinger.





When the bean was thrown it revolved rapidly due to the unwinding of the grass, and this caused a 'whirring noise' as it flew through the air.

Location: Fly River, New Guinea.

Reference: F. E. Williams. op. cit., p. 441.

## 2. Bows and Arrows

Classification: P-i; Te; Reg; Cumu (Purs, Dext, Simu).

In addition to the competitive forms of archery already mentioned (Part A, Game No. 4), children often amused themselves by wandering off with bows and arrows and shooting at whatever took their eye. Young animals, birds, and inanimate targets were used and success was its own reward.

Location: Wogeo, New Guinea; Upland Central New Guinea.

References: (a) H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 579.

(b) H. I. Hogbin. "New Guinea Childhood . . .," op. cit., p. 277.

## 3. Bull-Roarers

Classification: P-i; Te; Rhy; Simu.

From the relevant literature it appears that the 'bull-roarer' was essentially reserved for religious ceremonies, but it was not unusual for small children to amuse themselves by copying these. The basic form of bull-roarer was a flat-piece of wood, with some sort of string attached, which made a roaring sound when whirled around the participant's head.

Williams described a different variety which he observed being used only for amusement purposes in the Fly River area.



A piece of coconut leaflet about 7 inches long is doubled and the ends tied together. A length of the midrib is bent into an arc and the ends of it forced into a loop. It is swung by means of a handle made of midrib and makes a whirring noise

Location: New Guinea; Papua; Fly River; Solomon Islands.

Reference: F. Williams. op. cit., p. 441-442.

#### 4. Canoeing

Classification: P-i; Aq; Com (Pro, Rhy); Cumu (Dext, Musc, Simu).

Canoeing was not only a competitive game as described in Part A No. 6 of this paper, but also a means of individual amusement. Wherever children had access to canoes, and were required to master same for their roles in society, they spent long hours paddling and sailing for their own enjoyment. Competition undoubtedly stemmed from this free play situation, but it is important to note that canoeing was a 'pastime' as well as a 'game'.

Location: Southern New Guinea; Manus; Admiralty Islands; Torres Strait Islands; Hall Sound; Aroma; Gaile; Papuan Gulf; Guadalcanal.

References: (a) F. R. Barton. op. cit., p. 259.  
 (b) A. C. Haddon. op. cit., p. 318.  
 (c) H. I. Hogbin. A Guadalcanal Society . . . op. cit., p. 37.  
 (d) H. I. Hogbin. "A New Guinea Childhood . . .," op. cit., p. 277, 281.  
 (e) A. B. Lewis. op. cit., p. 161.  
 (f) M. Mead. Growing Up in New Guinea. op. cit., p. 18, 26-27, 117.

#### 5. Carved Toys

Classification: P-i; Te; Sta; Simu.

Toys were apparently rare in traditional Melanesia, as very





little reference has been made to them by ethnographers working in the area. Bell<sup>a</sup> described a toy in the form of "a miniature bow to the string of which is attached a small triangular shaped piece of light wood." When the bow is held in an upright position the piece of wood "flutters" down the string and the toy is operated so that "the fluttering triangle of wood never ceases to travel up and down the bow-string." Usually the player accompanied his game with a suitable song.

Haddon<sup>b</sup> described some water-worn carved toys found by him in Mer (Torres Strait). One was shaped like a bird, and, another like a water rat. The bird had a hole burnt through it, and according to his informant, this was made so that the toy could be drawn along by a string. Haddon also mentioned seeing crudely carved heads which he believed were "merely toys".

Location: Torres Strait Islands; Tanga.

References: (a) F. L. S. Bell. op. cit., p. 56, 85.

(b) A. C. Haddon. op. cit., p. 319-320.

## 6. Carving

Classification: P-i; Te; Sta; Cumu (Dext, Simu).

Carving, when considered as a pastime, is closely related to toy-making, and to playing with carved toys. However, Jenness and Ballantyne reported specifically that "in idle moments men often carve model canoes and figures of fish and animals, not to sell . . . but merely to satisfy their artistic cravings."



Location: Moresby Straits.

Reference: D. Jenness and Rev. A. Ballantyne. op. cit., p. 168-169.

## 7. Catching Cockchafers

Classification: P-i; Te; Com (Pro, Reg); Purs.

This is a real chase and there is much fun connected with it . . . The children catch them (the 'cockchafers') while they fly low or when they land on the lower branches of trees or shrubs.

The cockchafer is a large flying insect which, when caught, is roasted alive over an open fire and eaten as a delicacy. This pastime was usually accompanied by a song which was supposed to make the cockchafers come down and be more easily captured.

Location: Central New Guinea.

Reference: H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 580.

## 8. Cats' Cradles (String Figures)

Classification: P-i; Te; Sta; Cumu (Dext, Simu).

From the research undertaken from this paper, it appears that more has been written and recorded about string-figures than about any other single play activity. Obviously this form of amusement has captured the imagination of ethnographers and ethnologists involved with various societies and tribal groups of Melanesia. The quantity of information available defies inclusion in a paper of this magnitude, but the included list of figures give some indication of the extent, and for those familiar with this amusement, the complexity of cats' cradles observed in Melanesia.



D. Jenness--as observed on Goodenough Island, D'Entrecasteaux Archipelago, Papua. The Crab, The Snake, Two Parrots, Bololo'aki, The Basket, The Knee, The Baby, The Yam, The Bald Man, Matafwa'si, Na'ba, The Sun and the Moon, A Ripe Chestnut, The Brush Turkey, The Seine, The Pleiades, The Pepper Plant, The Banana, Wasifobo'di, The Crest of the Cockatoo, A Shellfish, The Ear-Pendant, Sisiafwa'tu, Cutting the Hand, The String-Bag, A Cereal Resembling Sugar Cane, A Hiss, A Man Crazy by Betel-nut, A Gathering-in, The Kangaroo, An Evil Spirit, The Boar's Tusk Pendant, A Panpipe, A House, Kiloma'dumadu, Fakale'a, A Canoe, A Paddle, A Squirrel, A Bad Pot, A Boat Sail, The Sago Palm.

R. H. Compton and M. A. Cantab--as observed in New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands. Two Men, Outrigger Canoe, Child, Bracelets, King Fish, Pouch, Butterfly, Rock of Waondeli, Star, Turtle, Look, Sun Clouded Over, Sugar Cane, Sardines, Bird's Nest, Loop-er Caterpillar, Porker, Lightning, Fly, Uprooting Maniania, Putting on Basket, A Lifu trick, plus three others which are referred to as "Nameless".

The the above could be added similar lists recorded by Jenness and Ballantyne (Moresby Straits), Lewis (New Guinea), Hogbin (Wogeo, New Guinea), Kathleen Haddon (Kiwai Papuans of the Fly River), Jayne (New Guinea, Torres Straits and Loyalty Islands), Maude and Wedgwood (Northern New Guinea), Rosser (British New Guinea), Aufenanger (Kumngo, Central New Guinea), Mead (Manus, Admiralty Islands),





A. C. Haddon (Torres Straits), Barton (Hall Sound and Aroma) and Williams (Trans-Fly, New Guinea).

Location: Moresby Straits; New Guinea; Wogeo; Kiwai Papuans; Fly River; Torres Strait Islands; Loyalty Islands; Northern New Guinea; British New Guinea; Central New Guinea; Manus; Admiralty Islands; New Caledonia; Goodenough Island; D'Entrecasteaux Archipelago; Papua; Hall Sound; Aroma.

- References: (a) H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 581.  
 (b) F. R. Barton. op. cit., p. 263-264.  
 (c) R. H. Compton. "String Figures from New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands," J. A. I., XLIX, 1919, p. 204-236.  
 (d) A. C. Haddon. op. cit., p. 320-341.  
 (e) Kathleen Haddon. Artists in String. E. P. Dutton & Co. Inc., New York, p. 65-92.  
 (f) H. I. Hogbin. "New Guinea Childhood . . .," op. cit., p. 275-295.  
 (g) C. F. Jayne. String Figures and How to Make Them. Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1962.  
 (h) D. Jenness. "Papuan Cats Cradles," J. A. I., L, p. 299-326.  
 (i) D. Jenness and Rev. A. Ballantyne. op. cit., p. 68.  
 (j) A. B. Lewis. op. cit., p. 166.  
 (k) H. Maude and C. H. Wedgwood. "String Figures from Northern New Guinea," Oceania, XXXVII, No. 3, March 1967, p. 202-229.  
 (l) M. Mead. Growing Up in New Guinea. op. cit., p. 22.  
 (m) W. E. Rosser. "String Figures from British New Guinea," J. A. I., LXII, 1932, p. 39-50.  
 (n) F. E. Williams. op. cit., p. 442.

## 9. Clay Popping

Classification: P-i; Te; Exp; Dext.

The participants moulded wet clay into a ball and used their elbows to press a round hole in it, and fashion a sort of bowl. The bowl was held upside down and slapped to a flat piece of earth in such a way that the escaping air made an unusual sound.



Location: Central New Guinea.

Reference: H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 582.

#### 10. Collecting Shell Fish

Classification: P-i; Te; Sta; Purs.

Barton reported seeing small children amuse themselves for hours collecting small shell-fish in rock-pools, or along the sandy beaches left bare by falling tides. While engaged in this pastime the participant invariably sang songs which were designed to bring the shell-fish, and shells, out of hiding. It may be objected that this was not a pastime, but an economic activity; Barton answers such criticisms as follows:

. . . I think that those of us who as children ever went a-nutting, or blackberrying, or mushroom hunting will forgive me if I classify them as games. . . . Neither employment (blackberry picking or collecting shellfish) contributes seriously to the stocking of the larder, so surely we need not call them economical pursuits, or by some such cold name.

Location: Hall Sound; Aroma; Gaile. (British New Guinea).

Reference: F. R. Barton. op. cit., p. 260-263.

#### 11. Damming Streams

Classification: P-i; Te; Sta; Cumu (Dext, Simu).

As the name implies, children made mud weirs to dam up the water in small streamlets in upland New Guinea following torrential rain storms. "Like children of other cultures, these dam-builders took great delight in breaching their constructions and observing the results."





Location: Central New Guinea.

Reference: H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 578.

## 12. Dolls

Classification: P-i; Te; Sta; Simu.

Various objects and replicas served as dolls for the female children in traditional Melanesia. Aufenanger<sup>a</sup> described girls using "the seeds of a pumpkin or a banana" wrapped in leaves, which were placed in net bags to represent babies. Lewis<sup>b</sup> pointed out that in Mailu, New Guinea, a "plain stone" was used as a doll. and in the New Hebrides, Solomon Islands, and New Caledonia he observed girls playing with carved, and sometimes painted, dolls.

As is true of children in Western cultures, the play patterns of Melanesian girls (and occasionally the younger boys) with dolls, was as close an imitation of the real world as they could manage.

Location: Central New Guinea; Mailu; New Hebrides; Solomon Islands; New Caledonia.

References: (a) H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 583.

(b) A. B. Lewis. op. cit., p. 162.

## 13. Drawing

Classification: P-i; Te; Reg; Simu.

Two forms of drawing as a pastime were noted from the available references. The first was reported by Aufenanger<sup>a</sup> who observed children, "especially the girls," tracing out figures of familiar animals with sharp sticks on the bare earth.

Barton<sup>b</sup> described the second form as a favorite pastime of



coastal children. They used charcoal and drew "spirited representations of ships, animals, fish, human beings, hunting incidents, etc.," on the sides of canoes hauled up on the beaches.

Location: Central New Guinea; coastal societies of British New Guinea.

References: (a) H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 581.  
(b) F. R. Barton. op. cit., p. 279.

#### 14. Fishing

Classification: P-i; Aq; Com (Rhy, Reg); Cumu (Purs, Stra, Dext, Simu).

Considerable information was available concerning the economic fishing techniques of Melanesians, but little was recorded about fishing as a pastime. However, as pointed out in the included references, children did fish, on occasions, just for the fun of fishing. No doubt their catches, if any, contributed to the food supply, but the arguments for including fishing as a pastime have already been expressed with reference to "collecting shell-fish" (Part C, Game No. 10).

Location: Wogeo, New Guinea; Manus; Admiralty Islands, Tanga; New Ireland.

References: (a) F. L. S. Bell. op. cit., p. 56.  
(b) H. I. Hogbin. "New Guinea Childhood . . .," op. cit., p. 277.  
(c) M. Mead. Growing Up in New Guinea. op. cit., p. 18, 36.

#### 15. Gardening

Classification: P-i; Te; Sta; Simu.

As described by the included reference, this pastime was



really one of model-making. Boys often pretended to cut down trees, burn them, make fences, and place small sticks and leaves in the ground to represent the growing crops.

Girls were a little more practical, and, when accompanying the adults to the gardens, often piled up little heaps of soil and planted sweet potatoes which may, or may not, have grown.

Location: Central New Guinea.

Reference: H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 583.

#### 16. Giddy Games

Classification: P-i; Te; Com (Pro, Reg); Vert.

The children observed playing these games extended their arms at either side and turned round and round until they were giddy. Sometimes a stick was held out horizontally in one hand to give the participant additional swing, or momentum.

Location: Kumngo, Central New Guinea.

Reference: H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 578.

#### 17. Grass Dart Shooting

Classification: P-i; Te; Exp; Dext.

Two methods were used to project the midrib of a blade of 'alangalang' grass up to distances of approximately twenty feet with considerable accuracy. The more effective method was to bare approximately half the midrib, hold the grass firmly in one hand with the midrib pointing at the proposed target, and thrust firmly against the loop of leaf with the index finger of the other hand.





The second method also involved the baring of the midrib but the loose "grass" was held loosely enough to slide when the long strands were jerked down and back with the other hand.

Location: Fly River, New Guinea.

Reference: F. E. Williams. op. cit., p. 441-442.

#### 18. Grass and Leaf Models

Classification: P-i; Te; Sta; Simu.

Grass and leaf model-making was a favorite pastime, particularly of boys, in Melanesia. Haddon<sup>b</sup> observed toy bows and arrows which functioned in a modified fashion; figures of "crocodiles, birds and long tapering cones," and working models of coconut leaf windmills were also noted by the authors of the included references.

Location: Moresby Straits; Torres Straits.

References: (a) D. Jenness and Rev. A. Ballantyne. op. cit., p. 168.

(b) A. C. Haddon. op. cit., p. 318.

#### 19. Headstanding

Classification: P-i; Te; Reg; Cumu (Dext, Vert).

From the description provided it appeared that the boys of Melanesia practised a type of "yogi-headstand". They "clasped their hands over their heads,"<sup>a</sup> and must have been relatively proficient, as some of the participants were able to "bend their legs and straighten them, or shake both feet in the air, etc."

Locations: Central New Guinea; High Valley, New Guinea.

References: (a) H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 577.



(b) K. E. Read. The High Valley. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1965, p. 142.

## 20. Kite Flying

Classification: P-t; Te; Sta; Dext.

Unfortunately very little detail about this pastime was reported, but the reference of A. B. Lewis, ". . . making and flying kites, as frequently occurs among certain tribes of the Papuan Gulf," merits its inclusion in this paper. For classification purposes, it was assumed that the methods of flying these kites was similar to that practised at the present time.

Location: Papuan Gulf.

Reference: A. B. Lewis. op. cit., p. 161.

## 21. Knitting

Classification: P-i; Te; Rhy; Cumu (Dext, Simu).

This pastime was closely related to economic activity, as the girls spent a great deal of time knitting net bags, armlets, leg bands, and girdles. The inference was made that this was done for the pleasure afforded during the period of participation, and any use made of finished products was merely a 'bonus' to the activity. This may be compared to the modern pastime of knitting, as many women knit for pleasure, and not because of economic necessity.

When the younger girls were "pretending to make a net-bag" they were obviously playing.

Location: Central New Guinea.





Reference: H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 581.

## 22. Lip Playing

Classification: P-i; Te; Sta; Simu.

Margaret Mead has recorded a unique pastime observed while studying the Arapesh people of New Guinea.

No Arapesh child ever sucks its thumb or one finger continuously. But it engages in every other conceivable type of lip-play. It flicks its upper lip with its thumb, with its first finger, with its second finger; it blows out its cheeks and pounds them; it bubbles its lips with the palm of its hand, with the back of its hand; it tickles the inside of its lower lip with its tongue; . . . a hundred different stylized ways of playing with the mouth are present in the play of older children and gradually transmitted to the developing child.

Mead pointed out that the children observed used this pastime to amuse themselves whenever they were cold, or bored, or simply had nothing better to do.

Location: Arapesh Tribe, Northern New Guinea.

Reference: M. Mead. Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies. Mentor Books, New York, 1935, p. 41, 51, 53.

## 23. Musical Instruments

Classification: P-i; Te; Rhy; Simu.

Music of many varieties played an important role in the spiritual life of the traditional Melanesian, but organized noise making was, and remains, a most pleasant and often practised pastime. Both children and adults amused themselves with a surprisingly wide variety of percussion and wind instruments. The drum is perhaps the best known of the primitive instruments, and in Melanesia the most common form



was a long thin instrument with an attached handle. The membrane was usually made from wallaby, or lizard skin, which was dried and scraped, and finally stretched across the open ends of the wooden cylinder. An elaborate drum may not always have been available, and often "hollow-logs", and pieces of wood, served the basic requirements of the aspiring drummer.

Pan-pipes made from bamboo, or reeds, were played by blowing gently on the upper ends of the pipes which were tied together in a bundle. One or more of the pipes could be stopped with the fingers to obtain a range of notes.

A bamboo flute was made with an almost closed bottom end, but only two fingering holes were provided to assist in note changing.

The Jew's harp was about eight inches long and made of bamboo. The thin vibrator was usually weighted with bees-wax.

Whistles were apparently quite common and were made from shells, coconut shells, or bamboo. The shell whistle was also made on a large scale; some coastal dwellers used large white spiral shells to make a trumpet.

"Clappers" were closely associated with whistles and flutes, and were extremely popular with the children of Tanga.<sup>b</sup>

The above serve only as an example of some of the instruments ethnographers observed in Melanesia, and undoubtedly many more were used by the people during their leisure times.

Location: Dobu; Moresby Straits; Wogeo; New Guinea



(Generally); Central New Guinea; Torres Straits; Eastern Papua; Sepik River; New Britain; New Ireland; Tchambuli (Sepik Basin); Tanga; Fly River.

- References: (a) H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 581-582.  
 (b) F. L. S. Bell. op. cit., p. 56.  
 (c) B. A. L. Cranstone. Melanesia--A Short Ethnography. British Museum, London, 1961, p. 40.  
 (d) A. C. Haddon. op. cit., p. 270-283.  
 (e) H. I. Hogbin. "A New Guinea Childhood . . .," op. cit., p. 278.  
 (f) D. Jenness and Rev. A. Ballantyne. op. cit., p. 164-168.  
 (g) A. B. Lewis. op. cit., p. 167.  
 (h) M. Mead. Sex and Temperament . . ., op. cit., p. 175.  
 (i) F. E. Williams. op. cit., p. 435-440.

#### 24. Pea Shooters

Classification: P-i; Te; Sta; Dext.

The simple "pea-shooter" was noted by Haddon during his expedition to the Torres Islands. He observed the children at Mer using bamboo "pea-shooters" to propel "abrus seeds", or "crabs-eyes", pellets.

Location: Torres Straits.

Reference: A. C. Haddon. op. cit., p. 319.

#### 25. Popgun

Classification: P-i; Te; Exp; Dext.

The popgun was made from a large hollow bamboo tube into which two small fruits of the 'wusil' tree were inserted--one at either end. When one is pushed forward, "the other flies away with a pop," and ammunition was reported to have been extremely plentiful in central New Guinea.





Location: Central New Guinea.

Reference: A. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 583.

## 26. Rolling

Classification: P-i; Te; Pro; Vert.

The children observed playing this very common pastime, selected a long grassy slope and took delight in rolling to the bottom, lying in a fully extended position.

Location: Kumngo, Central New Guinea.

Reference: H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 578.

## 27. Shell-Spinning

Classification: P-i; Te; Rhy; Dext.

This was the traditional Melanesian's form of the current pastime of spinning a large button on a piece of cotton. The Melanesian children threaded a string through two holes in a shell disc, passed the ends over their wrists, and made the disc spin and hum by rhythmically tightening, and relaxing, the tension on the string.

Location: Motu; Tanga.

References: (a) F. R. Barton. op. cit., p. 278.

(b) F. L. S. Bell. op. cit., p. 56.

## 28. Skippping

Classification: P-i; Te; Rhy; Dext.

There was only one passing reference made to children skippping or jumping a turning rope or vine, in all the articles examined. This, unfortunately, was only a passing reference made by A. C.



Haddon who observed the pastime in Mer, where it was stated to be "an indigenous pastime."

Location: Mer, Torres Strait.

Reference: A. C. Haddon. op. cit., p. 312.

## 29. Sled Riding

Classification: P-i; Te; Pro; Vert.

Children used slippery banana stalks to slide down the steep hills. They carried the stalk to the top of a hill, and either sat, or lied on it, and slid to the bottom. Since the stalks were round they rolled considerably and dislodged their riders, much to the amusement of participants and spectators.

Location: Central New Guinea.

Reference: H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 578.

## 30. Sliding

Classification: P-i; Te; Pro; Vert.

This pastime was very similar to the above, except the participants used no aids and slid down in a sitting, crouched, or standing position. Muddy steep slopes provided excellent sites for this particular activity.

Location: Central New Guinea.

Reference: H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 577.

## 31. Surf-Board Riding

Classification: P-i; Aq; Com (Pro, Rhy, Reg); Cumu (Purs, Stra, Dext, Vert).





Coastal dwelling Melanesians were competent and keen surfers and knew something of the advantages of having a board to assist in gaining maximum carry out of the long rolling waves of the sea. The board, measuring some eighteen inches long, and approximately twelve inches wide, was considerably smaller than the more modern "Hawaiian" and "banana-boards". The board was made of very light wood, and the surfer lay on it by placing it under his chest. Bigger boards must have been used in some areas as Becke<sup>a</sup> reported having seen girls sitting on these small boards while riding the "breakers" to the beach. It should be noted that the pastime was apparently enjoyed by both sexes of all ages.

Location: Northern New Guinea; New Hebrides; Tanga; New Ireland.

References: (a) L. Becke. Wild Life in the Southern Seas. T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1890, p. 147-155.

(b) F. L. S. Bell. op. cit., p. 85.

(c) A. B. Lewis. op. cit., p. 165.

## 32. Swimming

Classification: P-i; Aq; Com (Pro, Rhy); Dext.

To be able to swim was almost essential for survival for those Melanesians living in coastal societies, and prevailing climatic conditions undoubtedly had a great deal to do with the reported popularity of this particular pastime. Many references allude to the small children swimming proficiently at an early age, except perhaps Bell,<sup>a</sup> who says of the Tangan children:

All are not keen on swimming, and most of them have to be



carefully coached in the art of swimming. Peculiar to say, the first stroke which they learn is called 'kukum/pul' i.e. the paddle of the dog, and is an exact imitation of our own dog paddle. Later on they learn a somewhat modified over arm stroke. The breast stroke is used only by swimmers who wish to swim to the bottom of a deep hole.

Location: Wogeo, New Guinea; Guadalcanal; Manus, Admiralty Islands; Tanga; New Ireland.

References: (a) F. L. S. Bell. *op. cit.*, p. 56.

(b) H. I. Hogbin. "A New Guinea Childhood . . .," *op. cit.*, p. 275, 277.

(c) H. I. Hogbin. *A Guadalcanal Society. op. cit.*, p. 37-38.

(d) A. B. Lewis. *op. cit.*, p. 165.

(e) M. Mead. *Growing Up in New Guinea. op. cit.*, p. 18, 26.

### 33. Swinging

Classification: P-i; Ae; Com (Pro, Rhy); Cumu (Dext, Vert).

Swinging on "rattan cane" vines suspended artificially or naturally from the abundant trees, was a favorite pastime in traditional Melanesia. Many of the swings consisted of a single vine with a loop in the lower end through which the participant put one, or both, of his feet. Riesenfeld<sup>f</sup> suggested (in his excellent article on swinging) that the wooden seat, common to swings of today, was not known in traditional Melanesia.

The various types of swings, and the many different styles of swinging employed, almost defy recording, but most reports indicated that swinging over (and leaping into) water was extremely popular. Many simple songs were associated with the pastime.

Location: Northern D'Entrecasteaux; New Guinea; General



Melanesian coverage; Manus, Admiralty Island; Torres Straits; New Ireland.

- References: (a) F. L. S. Bell. op. cit., p. 56.  
 (b) A. C. Haddon. op. cit., p. 312.  
 (c) D. Jenness and Rev. A. Ballantyne. op. cit., p. 174.  
 (d) A. B. Lewis. op. cit., p. 165.  
 (e) M. Mead. Growing Up in New Guinea, op. cit., p. 175.  
 (f) A. Riesenfeld. "The Swing in Melanesia and Some Other Regions," Anthropos, XLI-XLIV, 1946-49, p. 737-756.

#### 34. Tattooing

Classification: P-i; Te; Sta; Simu.

According to Barton,<sup>a</sup> this was mainly a girl's pastime and they used blunt pieces of wood to trace tatoo marks on their bodies. This was more effective just after the skin had dried following a swim in salt water. Consequently, a swim became an essential part of the pastime.

Margaret Mead<sup>b</sup> reported a rather more awesome form of self-tattooing observed on Manus Island where children of both sexes burned "decorative scars on each others arms with red hot twigs."

Location: Manus; New Guinea; Hall Sound; Aroma; Gaile.

- References: (a) F. R. Barton. op. cit., p. 279.  
 (b) M. Mead. Growing Up in New Guinea, op. cit., p. 78.

#### 35. Water Jumping

Classification: P-i; Ae; Pro; Vert.

Although native Melanesians living in coastal societies spent a great deal of their leisure-time swimming, very little has been





recorded to indicate that they participated in diving. Bell<sup>a</sup> pointed out--

Although they go to much trouble in selecting a suitable tree for use as a springboard, and in placing it in position in a hole in the reef, they never dive from it head first. They always jump feet first. . .

As was common with many traditional Melanesian games and pastimes, jumping was also accompanied by an appropriate "ditty" which was often sung before the participant leaped out into space. This particular activity was not reserved for children, and the adults also became involved in water-jumping, particularly at the end of their day's work.

Location: Manus; Tanga; New Ireland.

References: (a) F. L. S. Bell. op. cit., p. 84-85.

(b) M. Mead. Growing Up in New Guinea. op. cit., p. 26-29.

### 36. Water Pistols

Classification: P-i; Te; Exp; Dext.

A home-made syringe was used by children to squirt water at everything which was dry, and everything which moved, be it wet or dry. The simple 'water pistol' was made from "a section of thick-walled bamboo fitted with a stick that passes snugly through the opening."

Location: Central New Guinea.

Reference: H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 583.



37. Windmills

Classification: P-i; Te; Sta; Simu.

Small windmills were made "in much the same manner European children made a windmill out of paper, and fasten it to the end of a stick, so do Papuan children fashion a windmill out of strips of coconut frond."

These small toys, apart from amusing the younger children, were also used in some cases to pacify and amuse the infants of certain tribes.

Location: Papua; Northern D'Entrecasteaux.

References: (a) F. R. Barton. op. cit., p. 278.

(b) D. Jenness and Rev. A. Ballantyne. op. cit., p. 168.

38. Whistling

Classification: P-i; Te; Sta; Simu.

This pastime was closely related to musical instruments and singing, but was not really a part of either. The art was not very well developed in New Guinea, but was, nevertheless, often practised and apparently enjoyed, particularly by the boys of the Kumngo tribe.

Location: Central New Guinea.

Reference: H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 582.

D. GROUP PASTIMES1. Ball Play

Classification: p-g; Te; Rhy; Dext.





Groups of children frequently amused themselves by throwing and catching many different varieties of balls. In many of these diversions there were no rules, and, therefore, a lack of competition to decide winners or losers. The fruit of the 'kai' tree, hollow palm leaf balls, balls made of "long cellular stalks of a kind of water-lily, these being wound into a rough ball shape," and 'Mucuna' beans, were all cited as examples of objects used for free throwing and catching pastimes.

Location: Wogeo, New Guinea; Guadalcanal; Torres Strait Islands; Aroma, British New Guinea.

References: (a) F. R. Barton. op. cit., p. 279.  
 (b) A. C. Haddon. op. cit., p. 313.  
 (c) H. I. Hogbin. A Guadalcanal Society. op. cit., p. 37.  
 (d) H. I. Hogbin. "A New Guinea Childhood . . .," op. cit., p. 278.

## 2. Bido

Classification: P-g; Te; Com (Pro, Rhy); Cumu (Dext, Vert).

This pastime was very similar to the individual game of "crossing the bridge", except there was no element of competition. Two lines of children joined hands across the rows, and one player lay face down on the interlocked hands. To the accompaniment of simple song, the child was "tossed" along the line by the rhythmic movement of the participants' arms. When one child had been tossed, he took his place in the line, and another was given a turn. The line often became extended by the 'back' pair running to the front of the line, and so on, until the tossers became tired.



Location: Motu, Hula, Tupuseleia, Wanigela--(British New Guinea).

Reference: F. R. Barton. op. cit., p. 266-267.

### 3. Bird-Calls

Classification: P-g; Te; Sta; Simu.

Children sat round a circle on the ground which was supposed to represent a pool of water. After joining the circle by hooking their little fingers together each chose a bird he intended impersonating. This was followed by a chant (the meaning of which has been lost) at the end of which two of the fingers that were hooked together were disjoined and connected up again. The refrain was repeated and the next link was broken and joined up again; this continued around the circle. Finally, one player turned to his partner, and asked where he was going, to which he received a reply that the person was going to his particular stream (e.g., pigeon's stream) to drink. The questioner then instructed this person to first drink salt water and then hold up his head for "good water" from above. Each person went through this act, and when all had finished, the question was asked, "Whom shall we cap?" The one nominated (e.g., the hornbill) went to the center and all hands were placed on his head. Then all of the hands were released and the 'birds' started to fight by scratching at each other's heads.

Location: Moresby Straits.

Reference: D. Jenness and Rev. A. Ballantyne. op. cit., p. 177-179.



#### 4. Courting Pastime

Classification: P-g; Te; Sta; Simu.

This activity occurred when a girl invited a boy to serenade her. At the appointed time, the boy recruited a number of his "age-mates" and went, after dark, to the house of the girl, who had also collected a group of her friends. The boys arranged themselves in a circle with their backs to the fire, and the girls formed a circle around them with the backs to the wall of the house.

Then there was an interchange of singing responses and imitations of bird-calls and animals sounds.

Various kinds of sexual play may occur during such a session as well. The girls are in control of the whole situation for they do the inviting and initiate the sexual play.

Location: Gururumba society, Upland Papua.

Reference: P. L. Newman. Knowing the Gururumba. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1965, p. 97-98.

#### 5. Dancing

Classification: P-g; Te; Rhy; Simu.

As pointed out by Ridgeway,<sup>i</sup> many of the dances of primitive societies, including those of Melanesians, were performed for specific spiritual reasons. However, from the included references it was noted that dances were performed simply for pleasure by small children imitating their elders, and also on festive occasions following feasts of celebration.

The dances were many and varied, and were invariably





accompanied by music, from instruments already described, and singing. The scope of this paper prohibits the description of the many dances recorded. However, it should be noted that the recreational dances included in this category were invariably copies of dances which had current, or past, religious meanings.

Location: Moresby Straits; Central New Guinea; Manus; Admiralty Islands; Torres Strait; Sepik Basin; New Ireland; Tabar Islands; Hall Sound, Aroma (British New Guinea); general Melanesian references.

- References: (a) H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 583.  
 (b) F. R. Barton. op. cit., p. 279.  
 (c) B. A. L. Cranstone. op. cit., p. 41.  
 (d) W. C. Groves. "Melanesian Island Life The Dance," Walkabout, III, No. 8, June 1937, p. 40-43.  
 (e) A. C. Haddon. op. cit., p. 289-293.  
 (f) D. Jenness and Rev. A. Ballantyne. op. cit., p. 169-171.  
 (g) M. Mead. Sex and Temperament . . ., op. cit., p. 17-18, 184.  
 (h) M. Mead. Growing Up in New Guinea. op. cit., p. 15, 34-35.  
 (i) W. Ridgeway. The Dramas and Dramatic Dances of Non-European Races. Benjamin Blom Inc., New York, 1964, p. 344-350.

## 6. Face Pulling

Classification: P-g; Te; Sta; Simu.

A group of children often arranged themselves in a circle and "made faces and grimaces" at each other. Eyes, ears, mouth, tongue, nose, and hands, were all used in an endeavour to draw a laugh from the assembled group. The pastime was a source of enjoyment for both spectators and participants.

Location: Central New Guinea.



Reference: H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 578.

## 7. Feast of the Dead

Classification: P-g; Te; Sta; Simu.

. . . it is played by a small group of young children of mixed sex . . . it takes place inside the women's house and under the direction of an elder sister . . .

The players were arranged in a circle around the hearth.

Piles of ashes were made to represent baskets of food belonging to people who had recently died. The leader then talked about the ghosts of these dead people and gradually brought the ghosts to the door of the house. The small children then crouched "with bowed heads and tight-shut eyes" and the leader sprinkled some of the ashes on their heads as well as her own. She then threw something at the door to make the ghosts depart, and at the same time spread the mounds representing the baskets of food. After an interval she told the children that the ghosts had gone, and they then "raise their heads with frightened eyes" refusing to leave the house because such ghosts have the reputation of "eating the wind of small children."

Location: Tanga.

Reference: F. L. S. Bell. op. cit., p. 58-59.

## 8. Finger Models

Classification: P-g; Te; Com (Rhy, Reg); Cumu (Dext, Simu).

A group of boys and girls sat round in a closely formed circle and used their hands to make models of animate, and inanimate, objects.





Movement was usually involved, and participants were required to do certain things with their fingers and hands in a set order, and regulated manner. Such pastimes were usually accompanied by a song which explained what was happening. The most popular models include the "ants", "cassowary-bone dagger", "the wasps", "the burrowing lizard", and "pig's eyes". The conclusion to each modelling action came at the end of the song, and the model usually collapsed when the children turned to each other to imitate the actions of the object recently conjured up. For example, "the ants" was concluded by everybody pinching everybody else to simulate the bites of ants.

Location: Moresby Straits; British New Guinea; Fly River area.

References: (a) F. R. Barton. op. cit., p. 273-274.  
 (b) D. Jenness and Rev. A. Ballantyne. op. cit., p. 174-175.  
 (c) F. E. Williams. op. cit., p. 443.

## 9. Handball

Classification: P-g; Te; Com (Rhy, Reg); Dext.

Handball as a competitive game has already been described (Part B, Game No. 6), but the inflated pig's bladder, and light fibrous balls, were often hit about by the children on a non-competitive basis. There is little evidence to show that the ball was hit in any special way, and the entire object appeared to have been to keep the ball up in the air as long as possible.

Location: New Guinea; Torres Straits; Motu.

References: (a) F. R. Barton. op. cit., p. 264-265.



- (b) A. C. Haddon. op. cit., p. 313.  
 (c) A. B. Lewis. op. cit., p. 164.

#### 10. Hopping

Classification: P-g; Te; Com (Pro, Rhy, Reg); Cumu (Dext, Vert).

Hopping pastimes were played by the children of the Moresby Straits, and Central New Guinea, where the participants took delight in imitating a "person who had severe corns on one foot,"<sup>b</sup> and were forced to move about by hopping on the other.

Location: Moresby Straits; Central New Guinea.

- References: (a) H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 577.  
 (b) D. Jenness and Rev. A. Ballantyne. op. cit., p. 174.

#### 11. Houses

Classification: P-g; Te; Sta; Simu.

Melanesian children were similar to children from all over the world in their desire to project themselves into the adult world by playing "houses". The given references described how boys and girls spent their play hours setting up "cubby-houses"; the girls tended to cooking and gardening, while boys went off on make-believe hunting expeditions.

Locations: New Guinea; Guadalcanal; Central New Guinea; Admiralty Islands; New Ireland.

- References: (a) H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 583.  
 (b) F. L. S. Bell. op. cit., p. 57.  
 (c) H. I. Hogbin. Guadalcanal Society . . ., op. cit., p. 38.  
 (d) A. B. Lewis. op. cit., p. 162.



(e) M. Mead. Growing Up in New Guinea. op. cit., p. 76.

12. Kiwiwi

Classification: P-g; Te; Rhy; Simu.

The children squatted in a row on their heels "and pass their hands between their legs, clasping the back of the left leg with their left hand, and the right leg with the right." They then chanted a song about the 'kiwiwi' bird with an ending of "pip, pip, pip" for which they attempted to jump backwards. Somebody invariably fell over, much to the delight of the other participants, and any onlookers.

Location: Inland Northern D'Entrecasteaux.

Reference: D. Jenness and Rev. A. Ballantyne. op. cit., p. 174.

13. Koko

Classification: P-g; Te and Aq; Rhy; Simu.

A. C. Haddon described this girl's game of divination as follows:

A number of girls bind their heads with bands of leaves or vines and flowers like a garland, or they make a rough sort of leaf basket which they put on their heads, . . . in fact they adopt as fantastic an erection of leaves and flowers as they can devise. They then walk into the sea until only their heads and shoulders are above the water, form into a line each placing her hand on the shoulder of the one in front of her, and repeatedly sing 'koko, koko, kaiep wageb', keeping in time to the music by bobbing their heads up and down.

After some time they returned to the beach, sat down in a circle, and ran their hands backwards and forwards through the sand while singing about being rubbed with fish teeth, a bamboo knife, and





charcoal. Finally, they examined their hands and if they were scratched or marked with charcoal they shouted, "Ah 'keg' has killed a man"; they then started again from the beginning.

Location: Mer, Torres Straits.

Reference: A. C. Haddon. op. cit., p. 318-319.

#### 14. Odolo

Classification: P-g; Te; Com (Pro, Rhy); Cumu (Vert, Simu).

This singing pastime began with "a number of boys and girls sitting in a row upon the ground with legs parted and extended, each child's feet touching the foot of the adjoining child." A boy and girl, linked by their index fingers, faced the row and, to the accompaniment of the first song, moved and stroked the ground with their feet in front of each of the seated children. They then moved behind the seated players, and swung their joined hands backwards and forwards over the seated children and sang a different set of words. Finally, they took hold of each of the seated players by their arms and legs, and to the accompaniment of yet another set of lyrics, swung them backwards and forwards, and then from side to side.

Location: Nara, British New Guinea.

Reference: F. R. Barton. op. cit., p. 277-278.

#### 15. Oura

Classification: P-g; Te; Com (Pro, Rhy); Cumu (Vert, Simu).

'Oura' is not unlike the individual game of "crossing the bridge", or the previously mentioned pastime of "Bido" (Part D, Game No. 2),



as two rows of boys faced each other and joined hands. Another boy stood on the joined hands and was rocked gently up and down to the accompaniment of a very simple two versed song. The song ended with "a little hoot" which was the signal for the boy to jump to the next set of hands where the song was repeated. Apparently each boy had a turn and there was no effort made to determine winners or losers.

Location: Cloudy Bay, Maile, (British New Guinea).

Reference: F. R. Barton. op. cit., p. 267.

#### 16. Reflections

Classification: P-g; Aq; Sta; Simu.

Children gathered around small limpid pools of water and took great pleasure in looking at their own reflections, and those of their fellows. Much face pulling and changing of expression took place, and special delight was taken in disturbing the pool to create distortions to the reflections.

Location: Central New Guinea.

Reference: H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 578.

#### 17. Running Pastimes

Classification: P-g; Te; Com (Pro, Rhy, Reg); Simu.

The described running activity could easily be interpreted as a type of "snake running", as a number of children joined hands to form a long chain. The person at the top of the line stood firm while the others, endeavouring to keep the line as straight and as taut as possible, ran around and around him, until the whole line was wrapped





around the center player. They then ran in the opposite direction to unwind themselves.

Location: Central New Guinea; New Hebrides.

References: (a) H. Aufenanger. op. cit., p. 577.  
(b) W. Watt. op. cit., p. 263.

#### 18. Sekor Lae - I

Classification: P-g; Te; Rhy; Simu.

This was another type of singing-action pastime as a number of children sat in a circle and formed a column of hands "by grasping in turn each other's extended forefingers." The actions of the participants were performed in time to an appropriate song meant to represent the gathering of wild fruit. The activity was concluded, temporarily, when a participant concluded his rhyme, for then he broke the chain in order to tickle his neighbours.

Location: Tanga.

Reference: F. L. S. Bell.

#### 19. Singing

Classification: P-g; Te; Sta; Simu.

From the foregoing descriptions of activities, it can be noted that many included singing simple songs as an integral part of their structure. However, singing was also practised simply for pleasure, and relaxation. Groups of adults and children were observed, particularly at night, singing around communal fires. However, from the available references, the evidence cited indicated that singing was



usually a supplementary activity in a variety of games and pastimes.

Location: Moresby Straits; Wogeo, New Guinea; Torres Straits; Northern New Guinea.

- References: (a) B. A. L. Cranstone. op. cit., p. 41.  
 (b) A. C. Haddon. op. cit., p. 238-239.  
 (c) H. I. Hogbin. "A New Guinea Childhood . . . , " op. cit., p. 278.  
 (d) D. Jenness and Rev. A. Ballantyne. op. cit., p. 164-168.  
 (e) M. Mead. Sex and Temperament . . . , op. cit., p. 17.

## 20. Story Telling

Classification: P-g; Te; Sta; Simu.

A popular pastime was to spend many hours around the fires after the evening meal, listening to the stories and legends of the tribe. Usually, the older men and women were the most popular story tellers. It is interesting to note that, traditionally, stories were only told at night "and then only at one season of the year, after the yams have been harvested."

Location: General Melanesia.

Reference: D. Jenness and Rev. A. Ballantyne. op. cit., p. 168.

## 21. Tug-Ear

Classification: P-g; Te; Com (Exp, Rhy, Reg); Cumu (Musc, Simu).

Children participating in this pastime sat around a circle and piled their hands one on top of another, with their palms uppermost. The last child to place his hands on the pile then stroked the next uppermost palm and chanted, "He scrapes the palm, a mushroom like the



ear of a grasshopper." He then withdrew his hand, flipped his lips with his fingers, and took hold of his neighbour's ear. This continued until everybody had hold of an ear in either hand, at which point everybody chanted, "My grandparent, what food shall we eat? Our yams we are eating." Then with the words "twist, twist", they all started twisting and pulling their neighbour's ears with utmost vigour and "the circle breaks up with shrieks of laughter."

Location: Moresby Straits.

Reference: D. Jenness and Rev. A. Ballantyne. op. cit., p. 177.

CONCLUSION

Having listed and classified the one hundred and fourteen traditional Melanesian play activities, some difficulties encountered should be mentioned, and some broad statistical data noted.

Regarding the latter, the play activities fitted into the following categories:

Individual Games	37
Team Games	17
Individual Pastimes	39
Group Pastimes	<u>21</u>
Total	114

Therefore, the distribution of games and pastimes was relatively equal (54 games and 60 pastimes), but individual activities far exceeded group or team activities (Individual 76 and group/team 38).

The difficulties encountered classifying the activities listed





were due, in most cases, to inadequate reporting in the articles used, as many required details which were omitted from the descriptions. However, it is felt that the system functioned satisfactorily when the details were given. Perhaps the full system of four or more dimensions is too exacting for studies of this type, but could provide a useful guide for future field-workers engaged in similar types of research.











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